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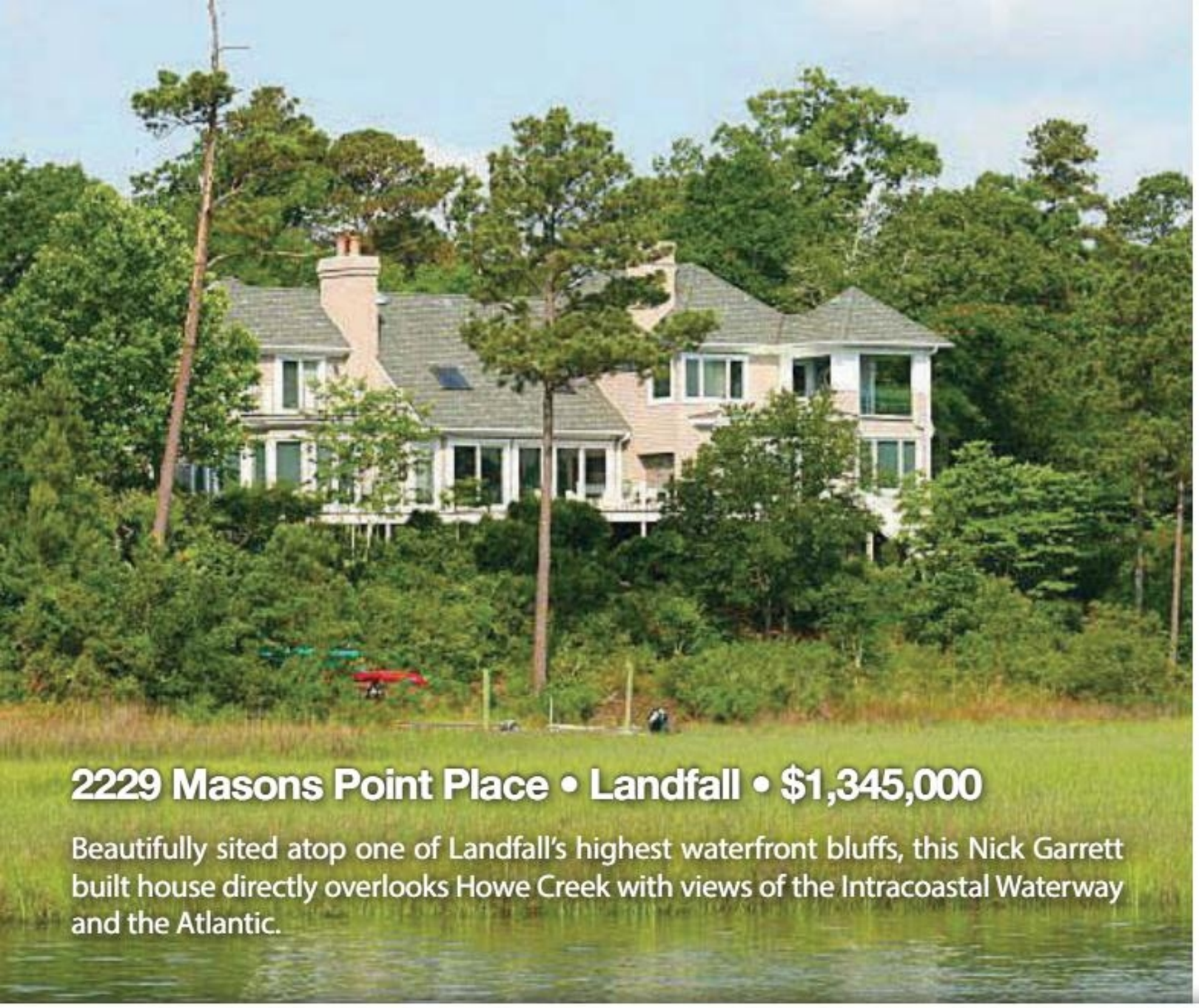

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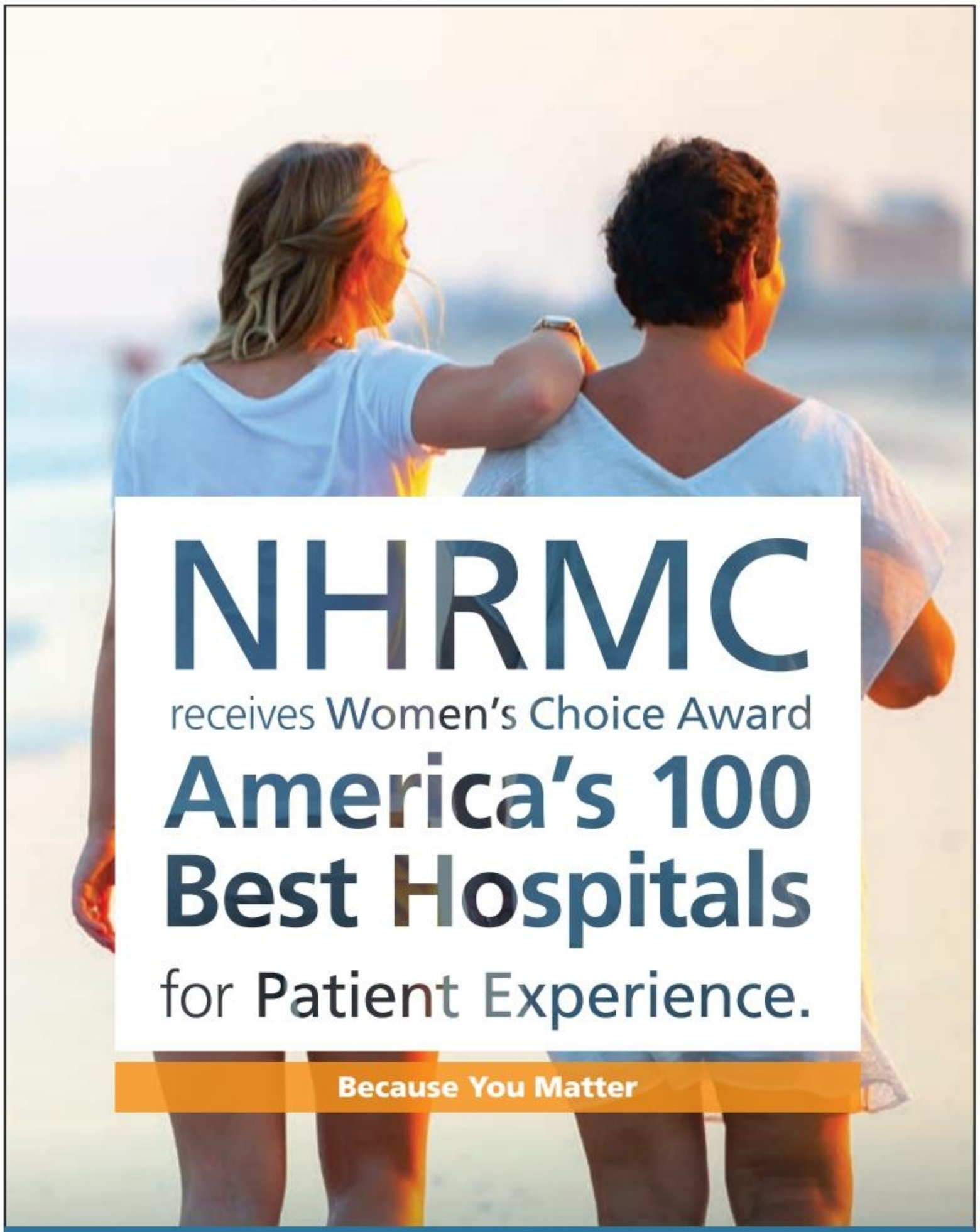
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4022 Market Street, Suite 202
Wilmington, NC 28403
910.833.7159

Jim Dodson, Editor
jim@saltmagazinenc.com
Andie Stuart Rose, Art Director
andie@saltmagazinenc.com
Isabel Zermani, Senior Editor
isabel@saltmagazinenc.com
Lauren Shumaker, Graphic Designer
Alyssa Rocherolle, Graphic Designer

CONTRIBUTORS
Ash Alder, Harry Blair, Susan Campbell, Clyde Edgerton, Jason Frye, Nan Graham, Virginia Holman, Mark Holmberg, Ross Howell Jr., Robyn James, Sara King, Jim Moriarty, Mary Novitsky, Stephen E. Smith, Astrid Stellanova, Ashley Wahl

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Ned Leary, Rick Ricozzi, Bill Ritenour, Andrew Sherman, Mark Steelman, James Stefiuk

David Woronoff, Publisher

ADVERTISING SALES
Ginny Trigg, Sales Director
910.691.8293 · ginny@thepilot.com
Elise Mullaney, Advertising Representative
910.409.5502 · elise@saltmagazinenc.com
Amanda C. Parish, Advertising Representative
910.409.4440 · amanda@saltmagazinenc.com
Lauren Manship, Advertising Graphic Designer
910.833.7158 · lmanship@saltmagazinenc.com

CIRCULATION
Darlene Stark, Circulation/Distribution Director
910.693.2488

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Alexander Koonce

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7000 West Creeks Edge Drive — *Cove Point*

This lovely spacious home offers an open flowing floor plan with a grand 2 story foyer, 10 foot ceilings throughout the first floor and chestnut floors in all formal areas. The chef's kitchen offers all top of the line stainless appliances, granite counters, and custom cherry cabinets, and 2 walk-in pantries. The first floor master suite, which opens to the pool and spa, includes a large bedroom, oversized custom designed closet/dressing room, and a bath that is truly an amazing spa experience. The second floor is perfect for either a growing family or guest suites and office, with an open playroom, 3 large bedrooms, 2 big baths, a walk-in cedar closet, and a huge walk-in finished attic. The sunroom boasts a slate floor, raised hearth fireplace with stacked stone surround, and open views of the beautifully landscaped back yard and pool. The back yard is your own secluded private oasis with pool, spa, terraced patios, and a professionally designed putting green all surrounded by lush, mature palms. **$1,195,000**

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Walkin' Man

By Jim Dodson

After two years of being sidelined from a severe injury, I recently underwent knee surgery and began walking to work in the mornings again and with our dogs in the evenings.

Frankly I'd forgotten how good it feels — how walking through a busy world at a neighborly pace provides useful time to think and helps one notice important small things right in front of your nose.

"I tell people that I walk for sanity, not vanity," says my friend Dennis Quaintance, the Greensboro hotelier who has been a dedicated daily walker in historic Green Hill Cemetery for years. "A walk helps me make sense of the world."

The health benefits of a daily walk are also amply documented, and I've even managed to drop a dozen pounds since I resumed my regular walks three or four weeks ago. Soon I hope to be up to walking a complete golf course again, just in time for my wife and me to slip away to Scotland later this month.

In some ways my involuntary removal from golf prompted a true awakening. I probably took the ability to walk for granted and am both relieved and resolved to be back cruising the world on two feet.

Ditto my new friend and fellow golfer Kevin Reinert.

We met last Father's Day at a family golf event I host annually for the Pinehurst Resort, a gathering of like-minded souls created around a surprise best-selling book of mine called *Final Rounds,* a story about taking my father back to England and Scotland, where he learned to play golf during the Second World War.

On the first night of the event I typically welcome 125 or so folks from around the country and give a little talk aimed at setting a lighthearted tone for golf and fellowship.

After this year's opening dinner, a fit-looking fellow about my age came up to say hello with his wife, Jean.

"This is my first year here," explained Reinert, offering me his hand. "I just want to say thank you for saving my life."

I smiled, waiting for the punch line.

But there wasn't one.

"No, seriously," he said, "your book on Ben Hogan inspired me to get up and teach myself to walk again."

And with that, he told me an absolutely extraordinary story of courage and one man's resolve to put his shattered world — and legs — back together.

It was a beautiful evening a year ago this October when Kevin Reinert put his golf bag on a trolley at Greensboro's Starmount Forest Country Club, hoping to get in a quick 18 before meeting Jean at a special fundraiser at the club. "It had been raining for days," he remembers, "but the weather had suddenly cleared. It was a beautiful evening."

Reinert, 62, is a retired Air Force colonel who spent almost 30 years working in recruiting and public affairs for the Air Force and Air Force Reserve. He was the administrator responsible for overseeing public affairs for 35 different Reserve units around the United States and the men who helped transform the Reserve's recruiting profile.

Eleven years ago, Kevin and Jean, who met and married while both were captains on active duty in 1985, relocated from Georgia to Greensboro, where Kevin went to work for The Brooks Group, a leading sales management consulting firm. Before being deployed to Ramstein Air Base in Germany, Jean Reinert taught nursing at UNCG and returned from active duty to become nursing administrator for Cone Health.

"Greensboro was a place we fell for in an instant," Reinert explained. "It has everything, great restaurants, theaters, wonderful people and a location that was perfect for us — the mountains in one direction, the coast in another. Our kids were grown and doing their thing, and North Carolina really felt like home."

But all of that changed in an instant as Reinert pushed his golf trolley toward Starmount's beautiful finishing tee.

"There was a group ahead of me, just out in the fairway, when my phone went off alerting me to incoming messages. I looked down, thinking it might be Jean, as I walked toward the tee. That's when I heard this ferocious sound. I looked up but I didn't quite register what I was seeing."

What he saw was a Kia Rio with smashed side mirrors barreling directly toward him over the course's cart path.

"I had just enough time to try and jump out of its way. So I jumped, hoping — I don't know — that maybe I'd land on the hood and roll over the top like you see guys do in the movies. I didn't get high enough," he notes with a laugh.

The car struck him at the knees and knocked him over the hood and roof before barreling on. Reinert was tossed 30 feet from the site of impact, landing on the tee. The car was estimated to have been traveling anywhere from 35 to 45 mph, driven by a man who was on a violent robbery and mugging spree, trying to outrun the police. He managed to get one hole farther before the car went out of control and wound up in one of Starmount's meandering creeks. The driver set off on foot, commandeered another car and was later apprehended.

"My first thought, as I lay there, was a kind of stunned disbelief. I saw that one leg was lying at a 90 degree angle from my body, and when I tried to lift myself up, my arm wouldn't function."

Workmen from a nearby residence hurried over, calling 911. The group ahead also rushed back. Reinert asked one of the golfers, a fellow member named Mike Corbett, to find his phone and call his wife. "Jean was over at UNCG and thought I said I'd been hit by a golf cart. She hurried over and actually got there before the ambulance did."

Owing to heavy rains, the EMS unit couldn't reach the spot on the course where Reinert lay, but head professional Bill Hall hurried out with a flatbed cart just as a fire unit arrived with a rescue board.

"They got me on the board and Bill drove me back to the parking lot, where the ambulance was waiting. It was a bumpy ride and he kept apologizing. I was probably close to being in shock but joked to him that he'd better not charge me for a cart because I'd walked the course. He thought that was funny. I also told him that if I'd parred the hole, I probably would have shot 87. He couldn't believe I was conscious and making jokes. But I knew I was in pretty bad shape."

Both Reinert's knees were crushed. He'd suffered a shattered femur, a bro-

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

ken tibia, a broken right ankle and a fractured right humerus bone, the upper bone of the arm. "There was a deep cut on my face but, amazingly, no head injuries," he said. "I was conscious the whole way, already wondering if I would be able to walk again."

The next morning he underwent six hours of surgery. This was followed by four more surgeries over the ensuing weeks. "The doctors couldn't give me a clear prognosis or even tell me if I would ever be able to walk or referee or even play golf again." Besides golf, one of Kevin Reinert's other pleasures was a budding avocation as a college-level lacrosse official.

After 18 days in the hospital, he was sent home.

He began therapy three days a week that continues to this day.

"The hardest part was just not knowing what was ahead. I sat and tried to watch TV, but the news was so discouraging I decided to turn it off and read books instead."

An old pal from Long Island who taught him to play golf during their college years together at Adelphi University sent him a box of books, one of which was *Ben Hogan: An American Life,* my biography of professional golf's most elusive superstar.

At the height of his success, while returning home from a golf tournament in Arizona, Hogan and his wife, Valerie, were struck head-on by a Greyhound bus that shattered Hogan's legs and nearly killed the star golfer. His obituary, in fact, went out over the Associated Press wires before it was learned that he was actually hanging on in a rural Texas hospital. Doctors advised Hogan he would likely never walk again, much less play championship golf.

"Frankly I was really down before those books arrived, worried that I might not even be able to walk and play golf," Reinert admits. "There were real similarities in our stories. I was so moved by his determination to somehow get back to the game — to simply walking — I vowed to myself that I would do the same."

In 1950, at Merion Golf Club outside Philadelphia, Ben Hogan did indeed come back, capturing the U.S Open on a pair of legs that had little circulation — widely regarded as one of the most heroic comebacks in sports history.

Kevin Reinert made his own big comeback, too. One evening last May, family and 60 or so friends turned out to watch him finish playing Starmount's 18th hole. "I was blown away so many folk came out to watch," he said. "Everyone had been so encouraging. I'd made so many new good friends. The support I got from complete strangers was incredible. I simply wouldn't have made it without them — especially my wife and children. My daughter LeeAnne, who is also a nurse, really pushed me at times."

Son Phillip, an Air Force flight engineer working at the Boeing factory in Seattle, was also present to play that final hole with his father. He'd flown home the day after the accident on air miles donated by Mike Corbett.

Reinert was wearing a cap given to him by a friend that cleverly read: *I Was Run Over By A Car On The Golf Course. What's Your Excuse?*

Another gifted cap read *Starmount 18: The Toughest Hole in Golf.*

"It was very emotional for us all," he says. "Made even more amazing by what happened before we teed off."

On the facing hill, a Scottish bagpiper strolled out in full ceremonial regalia and began playing "Amazing Grace." Another new friend offered to be Reinert's caddie.

"Somehow I made bogey on the hole, which allowing for my handicap let me write a par on the card," he explained to me as we played Pinehurst No. 4 on the first day of the Father's Day golf fest.

It was his first full round of golf since the accident and he did very well indeed, shooting in the low 90s with both legs wrapped in athletic supports, just like Hogan.

The next day, he even walked mighty Pinehurst No. 2 with a caddie.

"This was one of the greatest weekends of my life," he told me later. "It feels good to be back."

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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Collage Me Crazy

Collage is one of those mind-bending mediums — it sounds so easy, until you try to do it yourself. If your art pieces are more scrapbook than Saatchi, venture out for inspiration from the pros. Collage artist and UNCW professor Pam Toll curates "Ephemera: International Feminine Perspectives," a show of assemblage, collage and mixed media from female artists from around the world. Hailing from Spain, Australia, France, Denmark, Turkey, Slovakia, these artists speak mixed media. Eight American artists join them for this brief affair. Info: Opening reception Sept. 1, 5:30– 7 p.m. UNCW Cultural Arts Gallery and Mezzanine gallery, 601 South College Road. Exhibit runs through Sept.30. Call (910) 962-3440 or visit uncw.edu/art/gallery.

Party Wave

Wahines, groms, long boarders and short, paddle on over to gator alley for the two-day Carolina Surf Film Festival, featuring surf films from the Carolinas and all over the world. Stargaze, catch some films, shop some gear and nibble tasty things — just don't feed the gators unless you want to become a tasty thing. Good vibrations abound, like the fact that this festival benefits Surfers Healing, a nonprofit that brings surfing to children with autism. Info: Sept. 30–Oct. 1, doors open at 4 p.m., films begin at dark. Greenfield Lake Ampitheater, 1941 Amphitheatre Drive, Wilmington. For tickets and a full schedule, visit www.carolinasurffilmfestival.com.

Delta Dang, You Look Good

Whatever Tanya Tucker has been doing all these years, it's working. Though her first hit at age 13, "Delta Dawn," is enough to draw country music fans from the far and wide, Tanya Tucker will sing more than one tune. A nonstop career in country, a pink Harley-Davidson, her own line of salsa and apparently, an anti-aging secret reserved for people who played the Super Bowl, Tanya's playing our heartstrings like a swamp fiddle. Info: Friday, Sept. 16, 7:30 p.m. CFCC Wilson Center, 703 North Third St., Wilmington. Tickets range $35–68. Call (910) 362-7999 or visit www.capefearstage.com.

Back to Black Films

Attention, residents of Filmington and Wilmywood! You enjoy the indoors. The dark, cool atmosphere of an arthouse theater. You like to discuss the deeper meaning over rolling credits. While others are Netflixing and chilling, you are festival hopping. The 15th annual North Carolina Black Film Festival, a four day juried and invitational film festival of independent features, shorts, animation and documentary films by African-American filmmakers, is back in town. You don't have to be a cinema snob to enjoy independent films. Here are some of our picks:

Opening Night:

"Service to Man," a feature film inspired by true events, tells the story of Eli Rosenberg, who moves from Brooklyn, New York, to Tennessee to attend an all-black medical school. Tensions boil between students as they navigate race relations in the 1960s, forcing them to ask themselves who they are serving. Themselves? Or mankind? Directed and produced by Aaron Greer and Seth Panitch, the film premiered this June at the American Black Film Festival in Miami. Watch a trailer at www.servicetoman.com.

Hometown Highlights:

"Wilmington on Fire," a feature-length documentary by North Carolina filmmaker Christopher Everett, recounts the history of the Wilmington coup d'état of 1898, also known as the race riot or massacre of 1898. Everett gives a compelling historical and present day look at this pivotal event that brutalized the African-American community and set a tone for white supremacy ideology that pervaded the next century. Watch a trailer at www.wilmingtononfire.com.

"The Arrangements," a short film by Wilmington filmmaker and actress Tanya Fermin, deals with the conversation no one wants to have, the arrangements for the passing of a loved one. Watch a trailer at www.thearrangementsmovie.com.

East Coast Flavor:

"Boston2Philly," a feature-length coming-of-age drama, is about a young black man named Rome "Boston" Williams, who moves to Philadelphia for college after losing his family in a tragic accident. He searches for identity and forms unlikely bonds with fellow classmates on the chase for enlightenment and a $50,000 prize. Directed by Sikeith Walker. Watch a trailer: boston2philly.com/videos.

Info: Sept. 15–18, locations vary, including CFCC's Union Station, Jengo's Playhouse and the Cameron Art Museum. For tickets and a complete schedule of films, visit www.blackartsalliance.com.

Paved Paradise

Ooooh bop bop bop! Get your Joni Mitchell on downtown on PARK(ing) day when local businesses and artists transform metered parking spaces into mini interactive parks. Urban planning buffs will enjoy promoting green space and pedestrian-friendly park-hopping for this international celebration. Yep, in cities all over the world, pedestrians reclaim space normally reserved for cars. Wilmington participates for the sixth year in a row. Stroll up North Front Street, where local radio station WHQR often has live musicians and dancing in their PARK(ing) spot. Info: Friday, Sept. 16, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; visit www.parkingday.org.

Blooming Sales

The blossom has not fallen off this rose! A small gallery with big blossoms, Art in Bloom Gallery, is a renovated horse-stable-turned-jewel-box in downtown Wilmington. The current exhibition, "Full Circle," features new work from local favorite Elizabeth Darrow. Devotees of Darrow's will recognize her signature style and exciting deviations. Oriental rugs, quilts, kaleidoscopes and botanicals appear to influence this dizzying new series of paintings and collages. Fine arts prints from Susan Fancy and ceramics from Traudi Thornton round out the show with offerings for the inspired home. Decorators and collectors will swoon for these buds. Info: Closing reception Sept. 30, 6–9 p.m. Call (484) 885-3037 or visit www.artinbloom.com.

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INSTAGRAM WINNERS

Congratulations to our September Instagram contest winners!

Thanks for sharing your "Nature" images with us.

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OUR OCTOBER INSTAGRAM CONTEST THEME:

"Kings of the Road"

Take us on a visual joyride back in time with your classic, vintage and project cars.

Tag your photos on Instagram using #saltmaginstacontest (submissions needed by September 15)

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Lost in Translation

By Isabel Zermani

The last time the British pound was this low, the early '90s, my family took a vacation to London. We traveled by guidebook, to the public gardens in Hyde Park. The lack of swing sets and tire chips did confuse me. To the British, "park" meant glorious English gardens, free to the public.

The guidebook listed Elfin Oak: fairies and magical woodland creatures in a stand of wood, 900 years old, that only children could see. American fairies seemed unlikely, but this was England: home of Beatrix Potter, Peter Pan, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." What more could two girls — myself, 6, and my sister, 8 — want?

The map wasn't specific about the location of this magic forest in adjacent Kensington Gardens, so we set off in that direction. You may think Hyde Park isn't that big until you walk across the entire thing. My mother, a late-blooming gardener, had recently become obsessed with tuber roots. This slowed us down. "Look girls — a tuber root!"

Are we there yet? Convinced we'd walked enough, we began to search nearby oak trees for fairies and elves. Notoriously deceptive, we expected a challenge. We scrutinized each tree trunk for knots that resembled faces, ran our fingers over them, compared potential elves between sisters.

We expanded the search to all trees, not just oaks. Our parents were no help; we constantly reiterated the one specific point the guidebook did make: Only children can see them.

Flashes of light would catch our eyes from across the lawn — ah ha! — we'd dash over, unable to locate the source. We studied moss for tiny footprints. We hid behind tree trunks and whipped around to outfox spying elves. I could feel their presence.

Now we were looking in garden beds, peeking under mushrooms, day lilies and dahlias — more tubers! — hoping to interrupt a tiny fairy tea party. Under the pergola in the rose garden is just where I'd want to flit, if a nymph. I crept, but the rustle of pebbles must've given me away.

Hours passed — miles — immersed in exploration. My parents began to tire, but my sister and I were so desperately close to experiencing real magic that, at times, we were sure we already had. I defended a stick that resembled a gnome the way I thought my lawyer father would: "It's plain to see. This is *a nose and this is* a hat."

Finally, my mother called out. Not another tuber . . . she had found Elfin Oak: a single stump carved with magical creatures — mainly trolls, if memory serves — not hidden at all, visible to all ages. An iron cage imprisoned the "stand of wood," enshrined in mulch, that bore the sign that crushes children's spirits: "Do Not Touch."

We all needed a trip to Harrods after that to stomach the disappointment. We cursed the guidebook, the paradox of magic that once found, is lost.

But something was awakened in those gardens. The presence I felt was genuine and unnameable. Hyde Park introduced me to the subtle mysteries and energies of flora and fauna, my almost-fairies and maybe-elves.

These days, I revive that quiet seeking at Airlie Gardens or Greenfield Lake. People think I am birdwatching. Maybe I am. But I still approach each dew-laden leaf, each twisted tree, with light footing — upon what magic do I sneak?

Isabel Zermani, our senior editor, prefers the storied life.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABEL ZERMANI

Updike Redux

A collection of 186 stories and a new biography are a chance to reexamine a remarkable literary life

By Stephen E. Smith

In his biography Updike, Adam Begley quotes from a letter John Updike wrote to his mother while he was a student at Harvard: "We need a writer who desires both to be great and to be popular, an author who can see America as clearly as Sinclair Lewis, but, unlike Lewis, is willing to take it to his bosom."

Updike was describing the writer he'd become. For more than 50 years his novels, essays, poems and short stories filled America's bookshelves, and the upper middle class, the culturati from which he drew his characters and themes, received each new volume with enthusiasm.

When Updike died of lung cancer in 2009 (addiction trumped intellect), we were left with 30 novels, 15 short story collections and umpteen books of poetry and assorted prose to appreciate anew. With the publication of Library of America's quality two-volume edition (a boxed set) and Begley's biography, *Updike*, readers have an opportunity to read or reread 186 stories (the Bech and Maples stories are published in separate volumes) arranged in order of publication. Astute readers can correlate the stories with Begley's exposition of Updike's richly complex life as an observer and participant in the subculture about which he wrote with extravagance and often shocking excess. Best remembered for his "Rabbit" novels, it's Updike's short stories, most of which were published in *The New Yorker*, that most closely parallel the life he lived.

Begley is quick to point out that few American fiction writers were more autobiographical than Updike — so obsessively so as to raise questions about Updike's capacity for rational detachment. Readers unfamiliar with his short fiction are forewarned that his dominant theme is betrayal and its resultant complexities. His characters are white, usually Protestant members of the American upper middle class living in southeastern Pennsylvania or New England. His subject is adultery. The operative emotion is guilt, as explained in his 1977 story "Guilt-Gems": "A guilt-gem is a piece of the world that has volunteered for compression. Those souls around us, living our lives with us, are gaseous clouds of being awaiting a condensation and preservation — faces, lights that glimmer out, somehow not seized, saved in the gesture and remorse."

Updike is the master of *The New Yorker* short story, carefully wrought prose narratives with lengthy passages of description and meticulously rendered characters who find themselves unhappy in a world of affluence that encourages the guilty pleasures of adultery. So pervasive is this mindset that in "The Women Who Got Away" the narrator is touched with exquisite regret for potential affairs he failed to consummate: "There were women you failed ever to sleep with; these, in retrospect, have a perverse vividness, perhaps because the contacts, in the slithering ball of snakes, were so few that they have stayed distinct."

For all of his literary sophistication, Updike is the most parochial of writers. With a few possible exceptions — most especially his story "Varieties of Religious Experience" (a real clunker) — he wisely sticks to what he knows. Southern readers won't discover tobacco worms, hogs and banjo-picking rednecks in his fiction (although there's an occasional working-class hero), and his characters are, after the similitude of their re-embodiment in story after story, possessed of a mildly annoying self-indulgence and an irritating dissatisfaction with bourgeois abundance.

Moreover, the focus on the purely carnal is likely to wear thin when the stories are read without interruption. Even the most voyeuristic of readers are likely to experience a vague unease. Certainly sex has much to do with our lives, but at what point is the committed imagination overwhelmed by irrational obsession? Guilt experienced vicariously may have a temporary exhilarating effect on the reader, but it's accompanied by a sense of sorrow at having benefited emotionally at the expense of others. This becomes especially apparent when

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GESSNER

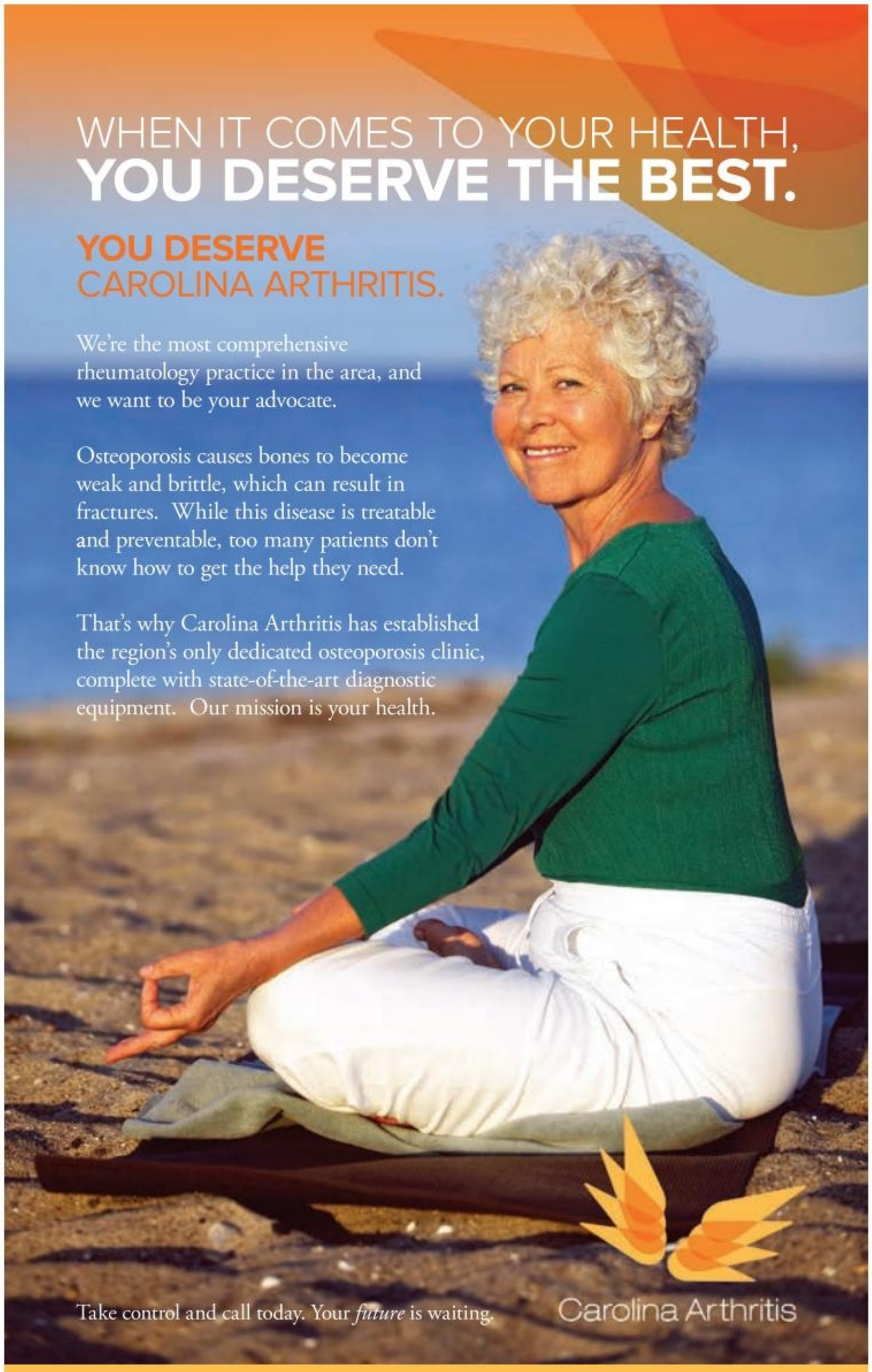
Begley reveals Updike's serial adultery, a philandering so obsessive that Updike was immensely proud of having made love to three women in one day, all the while living a life in which he remained a civic luminary and held responsible stations in various Protestant churches.

In the final analysis, however, Updike is more than a horndog with a thesaurus. In conveying memorable life moments, true and full of empathy, and producing examples of sense experience used to good effect, he is unsurpassed. The poignant, knifing nuances of life permeate his fiction, as with this typical passage from a pedantically sexual visit to a dental hygienist in "Tristan and Iseult": "Sometimes his roving eyes flicked into her own, then leaped away, overwhelmed by their glory, their — as the deconstructionists say — *presence*. His glance didn't dare linger even long enough to register the color of these eyes; he gathered only the spiritual, star-like afterimage of their living gel, simultaneously crystalline and watery, behind the double barrier of her glasses and safety goggles, above the shield-shaped paper mask hiding her mouth, her chin, her nostrils. So much of her was enwrapped, protected. Only her essentials were allowed to emerge, like a barnacle's feathery appendages, her touch and her steadfast, humorless gaze." Updike is tirelessly observant, and any careful reader of his fiction is bound to wonder if there's an emotion, gesture or technical detail that's gone unexplored.

Updike's early stories are a study in the evolution of the great writer he would become, and the later stories are often burdened with excess detail and Jamesian syntactical constructs that leave the reader yearning for a misplaced comma or a dangling modifier. The less ambitious middle stories — most notably those included in the collections "Museums and Women" and "Trust Me" — are varied in subject matter and more experimental in structure and execution. "The Orphaned Swimming Pool," "Invention of the Horse Collar," "Poker Night," "Under the Microscope," "Museums and Women," "During the Jurassic," "The Baluchitherium," "The Slump" and "Still of Some Use" are departures from Updike's formulaic adultery fiction. They're overlooked gems that avoid the quirky, distracting *The New Yorker* ending and are more immediately appreciated.

Updike became the writer he described in that long ago letter to his mother. A large segment of the American public took him to their bosom, convinced that his vision of America was correct — or at least sufficiently believable. Whether his literary reputation will eclipse that of Sinclair Lewis', well, that remains to be seen.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry, and four North Carolina Press awards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More Than a Showmance

For actors Heather Setzler and Jason Aycock, life is one sweet drama

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF HEATHER SETZLER AND JASON AYCOCK

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"I'm listening to the songs and I'm like, 'Maybe he likes me? I don't want to read much into it.'" Heather Setzler and Jason Aycock are recounting an early salvo of their courtship. "She was 28 and I gave her a mixtape," Jason shakes his head at his own judgment. "Heather, I put 'I Can't Fight This Feeling' on it! What did you think I meant?"

Heather grins.

Setzler and Aycock are sort of like Sarah Jessica Parker and Mathew Broderick around these parts: two talented, lovely, kind stage stars who happen to be married to each other. If you watch local TV news, you've seen Heather reporting on WECT. If you go see musical theater in town, there is a 99 percent chance you have seen Heather and Jason on stage: "Man of La Mancha," "Mary Poppins," "Spamalot," "The Wild Party," "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," "Little Shop of Horrors," the list goes on.

"Eleven years ago today we met at first rehearsal in 'Grease,'" Jason recalls with wonder and joy twinkling in his eyes.

"I was Marty," Heather chimes in.

"And I was Teen Angel," Jason adds. Cue "Beauty School Dropout."

"It's just so gross — it's so cute," Heather laughs. "That's how we met — as in first laid eyes on each other."

Rehearsal is where this attraction blossomed. "We spent so much time together . . . I just thought he was a super fun guy — he's a little younger than me. He was like just newly 22, and I was 28. So . . ." Heather looks at Jason and giggles.

"She asked me if I had an older brother," Jason supplies the answer.

One year later Heather was playing Marian the Librarian in "The Music Man." Disaster struck the actor playing Tommy Djilas the week before opening. Director Sue Ellen Yeats called Jason in a panic to see if he would step in. "I was thankful that he only had, like, four lines. I felt much better hopping into that sort of thing — the dances. To this day I still don't know the words to 'Wells Fargo Wagon.' I can do 'The Shapoopie' but all those words!" Jason shakes off the memory.

It's not really that surprising; he grew up in a dance studio — literally. His parents founded Cripple Creek Corner Dance Studio in Burgaw. "They moved in December of '82 and I was born in August of '83 and we lived in the dance studio. My mom and dad sunk everything they had into it."

To him it seemed perfectly normal. "The building itself was built in 1924, and it was a car garage and dealership. My dad worked it out so that we had three dance rooms, offices and living space." It's still a family business, but Jason's no longer there watching Saturday morning cartoons with his brother, he's teaching in the dance studio four or five days a week.

Though she didn't get on stage until the age of 25, Heather credits her parents' influence for her theatrical pursuits. They helped revive the aging opera house in their town of Newberry, S.C. and made sure Heather had dance and voice lessons. She sang in "show choir" in high school. But maybe it was the big family trip to London when she was 10 years old that put stars in her eyes. "I got to experience theater on a really big level at a young age."

In many ways, Jason is Gene Kelly reincarnated and Heather, his Ginger Rogers. Not only does Jason look like Kelly, but dance is his first language, and he's no stranger to romantic gestures. "Six years ago today — I picked the fifth anniversary of us meeting," Jason sets the scene, "after the curtain came down after our second matinee, everyone left the stage. Debbie Scheu did costumes and they wanted (us) to take pictures in costume. I said, 'I want to take a picture on stage.'" He looks at Heather and she blushes.

"It was a surprise," she breaks into a high wattage smile. "You said, 'If the next 50 years are as good as the last five, then I'll be a lucky man.' He got

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down on his knee and I got down there with him and said 'Yes!'"

The stage manager, Calie Voorhis, took their picture. Then they trotted off to their separate dressing rooms and to rehearse for their next show, Cole Porter's "Anything Goes."

Now Heather had a wedding to plan in addition to a full-time job plus showbiz. Actually, the last show the couple performed in before the wedding date was "The Producers." Jason played Leo Bloom and Heather portrayed the gorgeous Swedish secretary Ulla Inga Hansen-Benson-Yanson-Tallen-Hallen-Svaden-Swanson who Bloom elopes with at the end of the show. Art mimicking life wasn't lost on the couple. It seemed the perfect send-off. They were ready, but the wedding was not.

"I was struggling so much to figure out a venue. I was talking about it with my mom and my sister. They were like, 'What about Thalian Hall?" Most

of the weddings at Thalian Hall were in the City Council chambers/ballroom, but when they asked Tony Rivenbark, executive director of Thalian Hall, he was amenable to a wedding on the stage. Perhaps their theatrical efforts earned them some leeway. But the bigger surprise was still to come.

Heather and Jason planned to have a quick ceremony on the stage before crew and performers showed up for that evening's performance. "We were trying not to inconvenience anyone," Heather explains. "But then our friends did (the wedding) for us. Callie (Voorhis) stuck around and called half hour and places for us. Dallas (LaFon) did lights and Cole (Marquis) did sound!" She lights up like a Christmas tree recalling the day. "They took over, it was so great!" With the elements of sets, sound, costumes and lights coming together to make something magical happen when the curtain goes up, Heather and Jason's theater friends gave them that same gift for their most special performance.

See Heather and Jason perform together in the noir detective musical "City of Angels" produced by Operahouse Theater Company at Thalian Hall, Aug. 31–Sept. 11. Shows vary by day, with 8p.m. or 3p.m. showtimes. Call 910-632-2285 or visit thalianhall.org for details and to purchase tickets.

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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The Librarian Who Stole the Show

Over a Slice of Life pizza, librarian Margaret Miles takes us behind the scenes of the beloved TV game show Jeopardy

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

By Dana Sachs

Let's play "Jeopardy!"

Category: "Game Show Contestants for $500."

Clue: "This New Hanover County librarian delighted host Alex Trebek and a national television audience when she appeared on the show."

Correct Result: "Who is Margaret Miles?"

When Margaret Miles meets me for lunch at Slice of Life Pizza downtown, she brings along her knitting. Yes, game show success made her a local celebrity, but "Jeopardy!" fans didn't witness the thing about Miles that Wilmington people might notice first: She's an avid knitter. Today, she's got her "travel knitting," about 75 percent of a yellow, pink and purple sock. Don't get the wrong impression, though. "If you're knitting in public," she explains, "people will say, 'Wow. You're so patient.' I'm actually not patient." Knitting, she says, makes her "better focused than I would be otherwise."

As she knits, Miles tells me how she ended up on "Jeopardy!" "I've watched (the show) more or less forever," she says. For longtime viewers, the game becomes a habit, and Miles began taking the online test — the first hurdle for becoming a contestant — simply for fun. If that test doesn't sound pleasurable to you, then you probably don't watch "Jeopardy!" "It's a fan thing," Miles explains.

Only a tiny percentage of fans do well enough online, and in a subsequent in-person audition, to actually make it onto the show. Miles did, and this past March she flew to Los Angeles to compete. There, she joined the other contestants for that week's shows at a Culver City studio complex that is, itself, part of Hollywood history. Not only does "Jeopardy!" shoot episodes near "Wheel of Fortune," but parts of "The Wizard of Oz" were filmed at the same studio too, a bit of trivia that Miles learned in the "Jeopardy!" green room.

Miles calls the game show's staff "wonderful, wonderful people" who seemed determined to help contestants "have absolutely the best experience they can have," but being a contestant is not all fun and trivia. Before appearing on the show, contestants fill out a stack of documents, including one "horrifying piece of paper" that asks them to list "five interesting things" about themselves. Miles might easily name the driest continent after Antarctica ("What is Australia?"), but this list stumped her. "You're thinking, 'There are not five interesting things that people would want to know about me on national television.'"

"So, how did you manage to answer?" I ask.

Gazing at me across her knitting, her expression is both hopeless and wry. "You slave over it."

The truth is, Miles underestimated her own charm. When she did finally appear on the show and Alex Trebek asked, "What do you do for fun?" Miles's response laced no-nonsense fact with sly, unexpected sweetness. "What do I do for fun?" she replied. "Knit." And then, combining a slow grin with the perfect timing of a standup comic, she added, "And pet cats. I'm hopelessly stereotypical."

"I love it. I love it!" Trebek said, laughing. Miles's answer enchanted others too. Britain's Daily Mail later reported that she had "stolen hearts across the nation," while also noting that the Wilmington librarian had "smashed the competition." She won $40,000 over two episodes.

That's a hefty sum for "Jeopardy!", though Miles, like many contestants, wasn't playing for riches. Devoted fans, she says, "just want to see how well they'll do." For Miles, doing "well" meant something specific. "I was just hoping not to say anything really stupid as the answer to something I would later tell myself I should have known," she says. She also wanted to play Final "Jeopardy!" and be willing to take risks. "I didn't want to talk myself out of making a big enough wager to make a difference."

Casual fans might assume that "Jeopardy!" is all about facts, but winning takes more than just knowing the names of Dutch painters or Greek myths. Your categories of expertise have to actually come up while you're playing, and, when they do, you have to push the button quickly. "A good part of the game," Miles tells me, "depends on how lucky you are."

Category: Popular Cuisine for $300.
Clue: "Tradition says that this dish was first developed to celebrate the colors of the Italian flag."
Correct Result: "What is pizza?"

Besides whole pies, Slice of Life serves individual slices cooked to order. We try a couple of typical combinations (pepperoni, sausage, green pepper; basil, tomato, feta); as well as something more unusual (chicken, bacon, pineapple). Miles calls the pepperoni slice "really nice," and because "the green pepper hasn't been cooked to death," she says, "it's a bright, crunchy taste." We both like the feta pizza too, though the sharp, salty cheese won't appeal to everybody. As for the third slice — grilled chicken, crunchy bacon and pineapple tidbits atop a mozzarella base — it's my favorite, while Miles seems less thrilled. "It's an interesting concept," she says, but "not something I'd seek out." When I tell her I like the combination of sweet pineapple and salty bacon, she doesn't seem surprised. "All the popularity of salted caramel speaks to that."

Slice of Life serves more than pizza. The Greek salad offers a healthy choice, with banana peppers, roasted peppers and feta cheese adding complex flavor and texture. "Honestly," Miles says, "most salads I eat out of duty rather than enthusiasm, but (this one is) fine and a very nice presentation." We try an order of beef nachos, too, a huge (and patriotic) plate of red, white and blue corn chips covered with so much beef, cheese, guacamole, salsa and sour cream that Miles says, "I'm amazed they don't have it marked as a dish for at least two, and possibly more, people."

Eventually, Miles picks up her knitting bag and prepares to return to the library,

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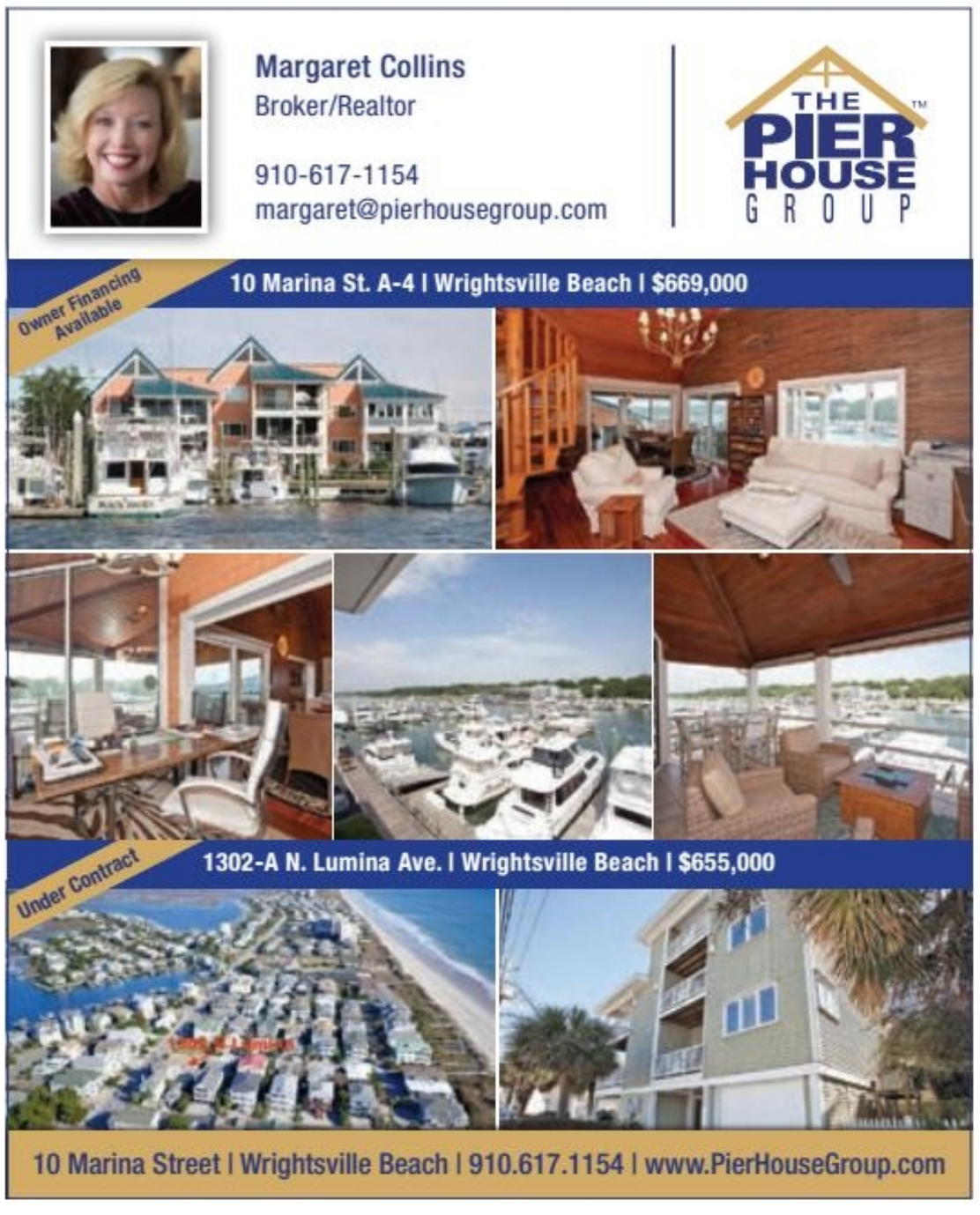
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where she manages both the technical services division and the children's section.

First, I want to know one more thing: "What was your winning question?"

Miles articulates the query "Jeopardy!"-style. "Far from New England, it's the state that has the shortest land border with Canada, only 45 miles."

I try to visualize a map. Seconds tick. If I were competing on "Jeopardy!", someone else would surely be the first to "Bing!"

Finally, Miles says, "Idaho."

I sigh. "Did it come to you quickly?"

"Well, that one did." She sounds relieved, as if she won on common knowledge. Later, I drive home with a map of the U.S./Canada border floating through my mind. I'm thinking, sadly, I should have known.

Slice of Life Pizzeria and Pub has several locations in Wilmington. The downtown restaurant is at 125 Market Street and you can find out more information by calling (910) 251-9444 or visiting www.grabslice.com. "Jeopardy!" airs in Wilmington at 7:30 weekdays on WECT.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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The Sweet Taste of Indian Summer

As days grow shorter and nights cooler, autumnal flavors abound

By Elaine White

The end of summer always seems to creep up on us. Here we are again, Mother Nature forcing us to say goodbye. Long days will turn into long nights. Cold weather looms just around the corner. For many, summer's final bow can be disappointing but, for the foodie, this time of year — sometimes referred to as Indian Summer — is welcomed with an open mouth!

There are a few weeks each year where both the fresh produce of late summer and the warming flavors of fall delightfully co-exist. In Wilmington, that magical time is now. While it's difficult to part ways with the summer sun, in the South we tend to have a much warmer welcome for fall; cue our "Indian Summer." Don't close the lid on your grill so soon; here are some recipes, tips and tricks to carry you between seasons. The abundance of the fresh bounty of late summer will make it easy to say hello to the grounding, savory flavors of fall.

TIP: To transition your favorite foods from hot-summer-day to snuggling-by-a-fire, add warming herbs like thyme and rosemary to change the flavor profile. Add ginger to warm any dish or the autumnal sweet potato, now perfectly in-season. #DishFlip

Grilled Tomato, Sweet Potato and Coconut Soup with Crunchy Curried Kale Chips

The garden is still in production; however, the clock is ticking for the young vegetation to mature. If your garden looks anything like mine, there are both unaged and overly ripened tomatoes, a crime not to utilize before the first frost. This is my situation year after year, which led me to the creation of this soup: perfect for the not-so-perfect tomato. Sweet potato thickens the soup, while the coconut milk adds a smooth creaminess (without adding dairy). Both bring a subtle sweetness perfectly balanced by the acidity of the tomato, a delicious dance. Vegan and gluten-free, none of your guests will miss the meat. This soup is my Southern, meat-loving father's favorite meal; it's that satisfying.

1 large sweet potato
4 tablespoons coconut oil
Salt and pepper to taste
4 large tomatoes
1 small onion
2 garlic cloves
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
1 cup vegetable stock or water
1 can coconut milk
1 lime

Peel and dice the sweet potato, cutting it into small pieces to shorten cook time. Toss the cubes in half the coconut oil, salt and pepper. Spread onto baking sheet. Set aside.

Slice tomatoes and onion. Keep it rustic. This soup will be pureed, so don't waist energy making each cut textbook. Peel the garlic. Toss all in remaining coconut oil, salt and pepper. Spread onto a second baking sheet. Set aside.

Fire up the grill.

TIP: Yes, the grill can be used as an oven and it adds a smoky depth to all that's cooked within. Grilling those imperfect tomatoes deepens the flavor and adds a smoked undertone. This step creates layers of unexpected flavor in this sweet, creamy soup. Can you do it in the oven? Sure, but the mosquitos have cleared and there's no ice on the ground, so fire it up!

Place the baking sheet containing the diced sweet potato on the grill. Cook with the grill lid closed for 10–12 minutes on medium – medium high heat. Sweet potatoes are high in sugar, so they do run the risk of burning. Full disclosure: I have slightly burned the sweet potatoes in the past and it only added additional smokiness. Grilling is relaxing, so relax. Wine if you need to.

Once potatoes are slightly soft, flip. Lower the heat and add the second baking sheet containing the tomatoes, garlic and onion to the grill. Cook with the grill lid closed for an additional 10–12 minutes on medium heat.

Once cooked, turn off the grill. Take both baking sheets to the stovetop and transfer contents to a pot over medium heat. Be sure to pour all of the juices from the baking sheets into the pot. That's where the magic lives.

Add ginger, stock and almost-all-of the coconut milk, keeping a small amount aside for garnish. The stock is really there to loosen up the soup, so

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

depending on how thick you like it, adjust accordingly.

Simmer for 5 minutes before pureeing. An immersion blender will make this process much easier. If you use an upright blender, hold the lid down with a dishtowel while blending to prevent any spillage. Blend until smooth.

Serve with a drizzle of the remaining coconut milk on top as garnish, a wedge of lime and side of curried kale chips. My dad recommends dipping them.

Make it your own: This dish is delicious as is, but feel free to add a protein. Grilled sweet prawns nestled in the center of the bowl would be a picturesque addition.

Kale Talk

September is all about the kale and so am I! This time of year will offer both mature and baby kale, making this vegetable the undisputed king of greens, taking us into autumn. Mature kale can be very bitter raw and will require cooking to break down the fibrous leaves, pulling the earthy flavors forward and leaving the bitterness behind like a summer fling. A new crop of kale planted at summer's end will pop up in early September and is perfect for salads. Here are two easy recipes to highlight this trending green.

Crunchy Curried Kale Chips

Not a fan of kale? These kale chips are sure to convert you. Kale chips came into my life, in Los Angeles, on set of one of the shows I produce for Food Network. It was honestly love at first bite. This crispy snack has literally become my number one addiction. After a few years of playing around with my own recipes, let me present my crunchy curried kale chips. The deep, earthy, bold flavor of baked kale is enhanced, not masked, by the curry. Serve next to the grilled tomato and coconut soup or eat them on their own. Either way, there will be no leftovers!

1/2 large bunch of kale
2 tablespoons olive oil
3 teaspoons yellow curry powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

Run your fingers along the thick core of the kale, tearing the leaves from the spine. Your chips will cook more evenly if the kale is roughly the same size when put into the oven. The leaves will shrink considerably. Baking time will vary per the size of the leaves.

Add olive oil, curry powder and salt to kale and massage the oil into each leaf. Well-coated kale will be crunchy kale. This is where kale chips most often go wrong. Give them the massage you wish you were getting.

Spread on a baking sheet. For best results, don't overcrowd the pan. They need to have room to ensure an even cook.

Bake at 375 degrees for 10–15 minutes until the edges of the kale chips are slightly brown and there is no moisture in the center of the chip. If you use an insulated cookie sheet, they will take longer.

September Kale and Fennel Salad

Each month in my home I create a salad that signifies the best of the garden's offerings. Because this month belongs to kale, it's the obvious choice to form the base. Kale is a strong green that stands up to bold flavors and can hold vinaigrette without wilting. Topped with seasonal shaved fennel, pomegranate seeds and pistachios all lightly tossed in a grapefruit and honey vinaigrette, this mosaic of vegetables is perfect on any breakfast, lunch or dinner table. This salad can be made in advance and will get better as it sits, making it a no-fuss option when entertaining; it's my go-to for September and the number one dish currently requested by my fiancé.

Juice of 1/2 a grapefruit
1 tablespoon honey
1/4 cup olive oil
Salt and Pepper
Baby kale
1 bulb fennel, shaved
Shaved parmesan (as much or as little as you want. I use roughly 1/4 cup)
Handful pistachios
Handful pomegranate seeds

Make Vinagrette: Combine grapefruit juice and honey. Whisk. While whisking, drizzle in olive oil. Add salt and pepper.

Build the salad: The core of baby kale is typically edible but if it's tough, rip it out, leaving just the leafy greens.

Combine the kale and fennel in a bowl or on a platter and toss with vinaigrette. Top with the shaved Parmesan, pistachios and pomegranate seeds.

Savory Braised Chicken with Figs

It's here. The beginning of fig season. While the fig has a taste unlike any other fruit, it would best be described as a sweet blend of peach and strawberry. However, unlike its flavorful relatives, figs will not ripen further once picked, making their season short, highly desirable and happening right now. Because of their short shelf life, figs are often dried or cooked into jams and preserves. In their raw glory, figs are spotted on cheese plates or tapas menus paired with goat cheese and prosciutto and, yes, that is all delicious, but there is nothing like a braised fig with chicken, herbs and wine — a surprising combo that must be tried. Figs provide a beautifully subtle sweetness to any dish and when cooked, the texture of the fig is one of my favorite bites – slightly chewy with a little crunch from the tiny seeds. It's easy to imagine they grew plentifully in the Garden of Eden.

Braised Chicken with Figs is a one-pot dish, a set-it and forget-it dish that feels special, a comfort food that is truly elevated by the fig. While this braised entrée is slow-cooked, it is also light and bright with tart white wine and sweet figs, making it perfect for the transitional season we're in and dispelling the myth that braising means heavy. Go "fig"ure.

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TIP: Chicken cooked on the bone will add flavor and is less likely to dry out, making it generally more forgiving.

2 bone-in chicken thighs
2 bone-in chicken legs
Salt and pepper
Olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
1 medium onion
2 bay leaves
4 sprigs thyme
2/3 cup dry white wine
1 cup chicken stock
6 figs
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons honey

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Pat chicken dry. Sprinkle with salt and pepper on both sides.

Lightly coat the bottom of a cast iron skillet with olive oil and add a tablespoon of butter. Heat pan over medium–medium high. Once the butter has melted and the pan is hot, add chicken skin side down. Brown on both sides.

Meanwhile, cut the onion into six wedges, keeping the segments intact at the root.

Once chicken has browned, tuck the onion, bay leaves and thyme around the chicken. Pour in white wine and chicken stock. The measurement matters less. Make sure the liquid is about half an inch deep and the chicken is not submerged. Use a dry white wine, like pinot grigio or sauvignon blanc, and then pour yourself a glass. This dish is low maintenance so you'll have plenty of time for sipping.

Put your skillet in the oven and bake uncovered for 40 minutes at 425 degrees. While in the oven, cut the figs into halves.

Pull your skillet from the oven and return to stovetop burner. Bring to a simmer.

Add apple cider vinegar and honey. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Add halved figs and simmer for another 3 minutes.

Serve with toasted or grilled crusty bread.

TIP: When buying fresh figs, smell them. They spoil quickly, so smell for sweet floral notes. Anything sour has turned. Plant your own fig tree for a sweet, rapturous treat every year.

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The Spirited Peach Cocktail

(Or The Ticklish Peach or Take Your Thyme Peach Fizz)

The craze for craft cocktails is definitely real and this "Spirited Peach Cocktail" hits all the right notes. Fresh peaches caramelized on the grill for a sweet-smoky flavor team up with herbaceous thyme and warming whiskey. On a backyard barbecue or a indoor grill pan, grilling a peach brings out natural sugars that mimic the sweet oak undertones of whiskey beautifully, making this cocktail my go-to for the relaxing temperate evenings to come. The flavors make my palette excited about fall. I'll take two.

2 small peaches (1 quarter peach per cocktail and 1 slice for garnish)
3 ounces thyme simple syrup (recipe below)
6 ounces whiskey (1 1/2 ounces per cocktail)
2 ounces lemon juice
Club soda or ginger ale (to taste)

Cut peaches in half, remove pits and place peach halves on a hot grill. Caramelization will happen quickly, roughly 2–3 minutes.

Add grilled peaches and simple syrup to a martini shaker. Muddle.

Pour in whiskey and lemon juice.

Shake vigorously to infuse ingredients.

Pour (strain if desired) over fresh ice and top with club soda.

Garnish with fresh thyme and a grilled peach wedge.

If hosting a cocktail party, serve the whiskey and peach blend in one pitcher and serve soda water in another. This allows your guests the freedom to make their drink as stout as they'd like.

Thyme Simple Syrup

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup water
5 sprigs of thyme (more if you want to garnish)

In a small saucepan combine the sugar, water and thyme.

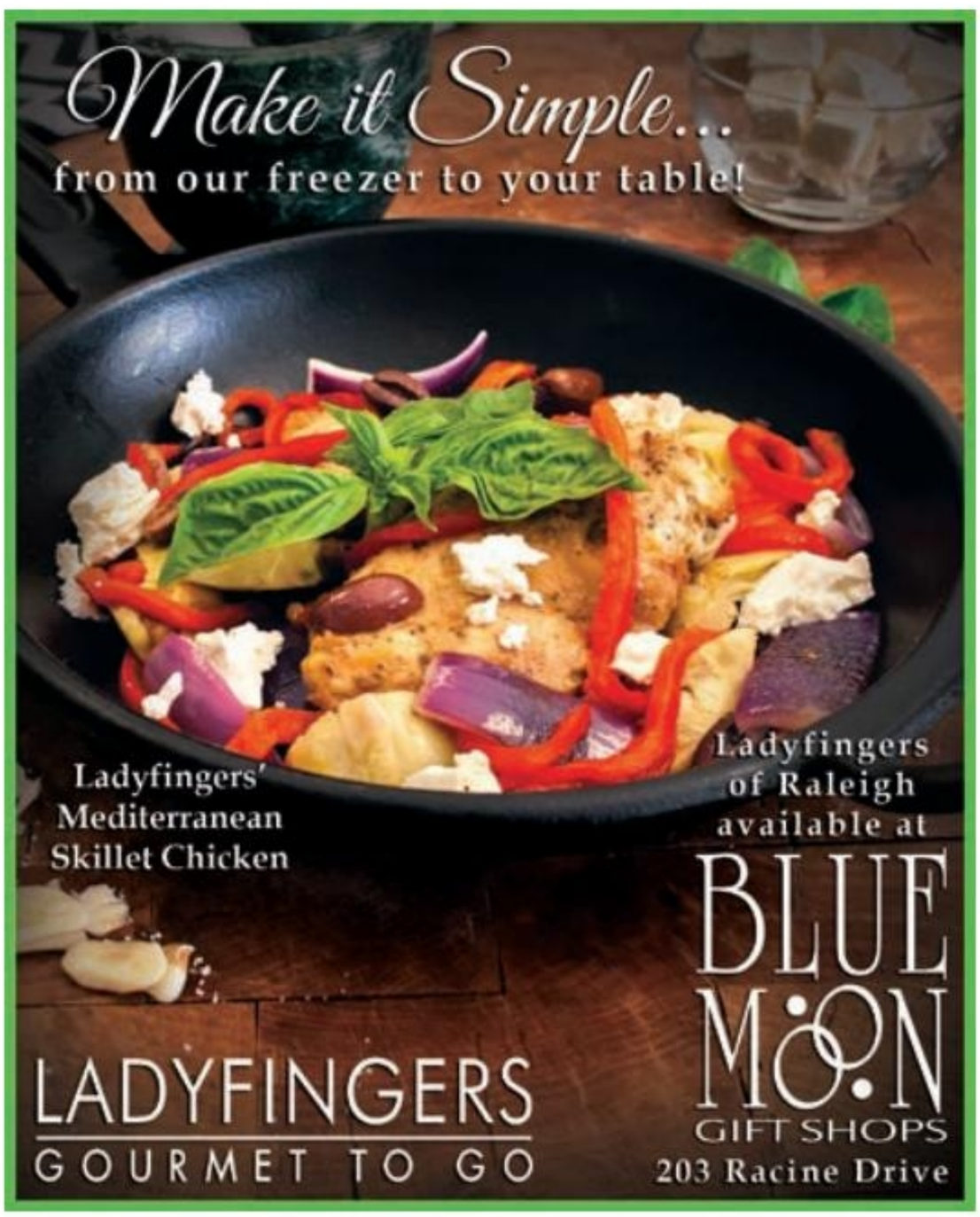
Bring to a simmer while crushing the thyme with a wooden spoon to extract the flavor.

Once it boils, remove from heat and let cool completely.

Transfer to a container and chill in the fridge until ready to use.

(For regular simple syrup omit thyme. This recipe will work with any herbs. For a stronger flavor, add more herbs.)

Elaine White discovered her love for all things culinary while working on the hit series, "Top Chef." She now splits her time between the two coasts.



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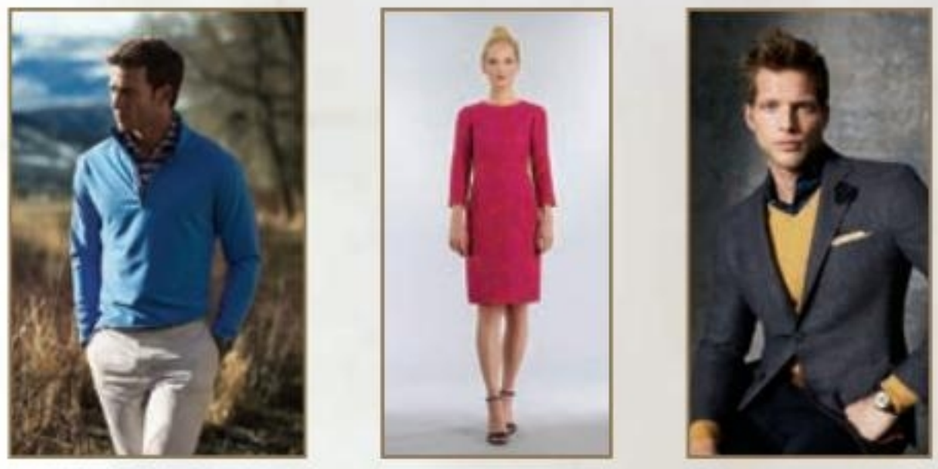

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Double-Crested Cormorant

Ol' blue eyes

By Susan Campbell

Double-crested

cormorants are odd-looking birds: like a cross between a loon and a goose, hardly as striking as its close cousin the magnificent frigatebird, last month's exotic beauty. Seemingly a dull black bird with long neck and pointed wings, should you see it at close range, it does sport some color. Bright orange-yellow facial skin and shockingly aquamarine eyes stand out. Furthermore, breeding birds have two quizzical black and white tufts on their heads as well as blue mouths.

These waterbirds can be found along our coast in huge flocks during the cooler months — but no doubt are overlooked by many. This large, gull-like bird has few admirers. They only get noticed when sitting with wings outstretched, drying in the sun, perched on channel markers or bulkheads. Less waterproof than most, their lack of buoyancy makes it easier to swim after prey in deep water. You can spot them by many bodies of water, from retention ponds to marshes and estuaries or the open ocean, where they often forage together by the thousands.

Widely distributed across North America, they breed on rocky outcroppings off the coast of Canada and Alaska as well as on islands in wetter portions of the Upper Midwest. They build bulky nests in stout trees or on the ground in colonies. Flocks migrate across the United States to coastal wintering sites. Some cormorants can even be found away from the coast in the wetter habitats of the Southeast.

Given that this species primarily feeds on a variety of fish and can congregate in large numbers, it is sometimes considered a nuisance by fish farmers and fishermen. Double-crested cormorants have strongly hooked bills, which — along with their strong, webbed feet — definitely make them good fishers. More often than not, their foraging goes unnoticed, especially here in North Carolina. Abundant along our coastline from November through March, they congregate late in the day to roost on the open sounds, then disperse in every direction to feed along the coast from inland lakes such as Mattamuskeet, Pungo, Pettigrew, Oregon Inlet, or from the mouth of the Cape Fear River to the open ocean. Moving from place to place, they form "skeins" or V-formations that can be an impressive thousand-or-more birds strong.

Seeing this species fly en masse makes it hard to believe that double-crested cormorant populations were once imperiled. Widespread use of pesticides in the 1960s and '70s impacted the breeding success of many birds, especially those high up on the food chain. Compounds such as DDT caused eggshell thinning and thus, a precipitous decline in breeding productivity until DDT was banned in the U.S. in 1969. Recovery for these odd birds was swift, and numbers remain high in spite of increased human activity throughout the species' range. As the cool weather sets in, look for these funny fellows fishing by piers or flying sky-high in large flocks.

Susan would love to hear from you. Feel free to send questions or wildlife observations to susan@ncaves.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBRA REGULA

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Stephanie P., *9th grade*

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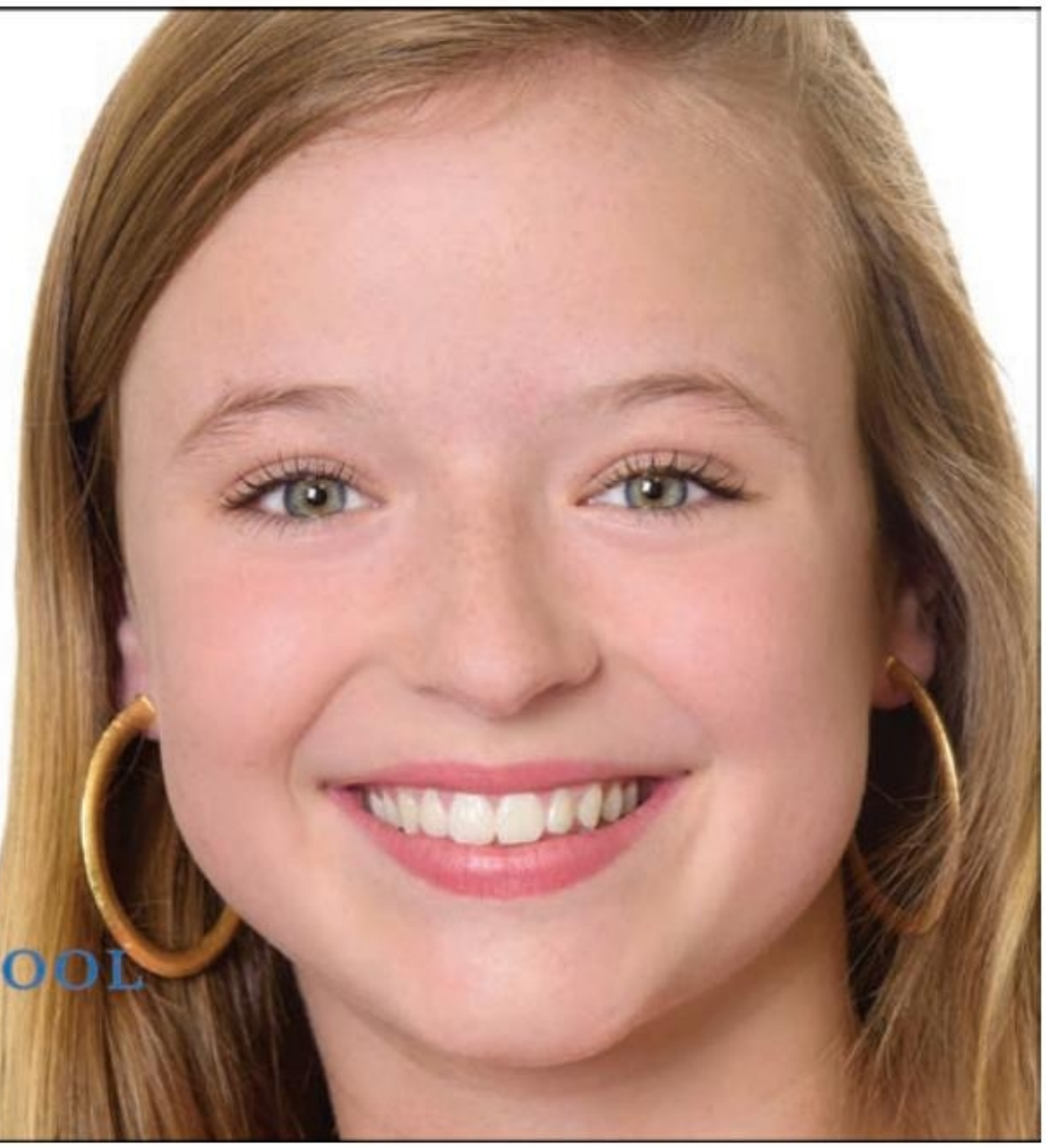

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The Water Dwellers

Home is a boat where romance and adventure are as close as the open ocean, and freedom an irresistable song

By John Wolfe

Standing on the Causeway Bridge at Wrightsville Beach, you see them to the south, lazily swinging around their anchors: boats of all sizes — power and sail, wood, metal, fiberglass. Exotic flags flutter in their rigging. Names of romantic foreign ports are painted on their transoms: New Zealand, France, South Africa, Canada, both American coasts. At night, lonely white lamps atop their masts dot the harbor, signifying the vessel is anchored. These firefly pricks of light dance as the lamps bob 50 feet above the open water, reflected at sea level and reaching toward the firmament above. Each light is a boat, each boat is a home, the mollusk-like shell of these traveling people who dwell upon the sea.

Where are they from? Who lives aboard them, these carriers of our dreams? What storms have they weathered? What brings them to our little city by the vast sea which connects us to every other port in the world? What distant lands and peoples, what strange scriptures, have they left in their wakes? I decided to go ask.

"We are gypsies, I think," says Nola Kathleen. "Gypsies looking to be out in nature, away from consumerism and materialistic means. It's the only thing we find really important: living simply, eating well and trying to give back when we can." Nola squints at me through her glasses. Her face is deeply tanned under short-cropped brown hair and emanates that necessary kindness found on the frontier, where people must rely on others to survive.

Nola's home port: Sitka, Alaska. She and her husband, Jerry Sharrard (and their white doodle, Tara the Salty Dog), are anchored where Bradley Creek flows into Banks Channel. Their 50-foot-long wooden sailboat, S/V Moonsong, was named for the howling of huskies. The boat is the culmination of a lifetime of Jerry's woodworking; the joinery reveals the delicate precision-work of a master craftsman. Moonsong is a geometrical wonder, a marriage of perfect squares and seamless ovals — roots and rootlessness — of green leaves and salt water. Jerry and Nola built this boat on Prince-of-Wales Island in southeast Alaska, while Nola worked as a teacher, a tugboat crew, and a salmon seine-fisher. The spirits in the harvested trees hewn for her worn decks and sturdy beams live on.

"When I got out of college in the early '70s," says Jerry, "I did an apprenticeship with an old-time boatbuilder on the coast of Oregon, a guy named Joe McGlasson, who was a well-known marine architect . . . He designed this boat, kind of as a present, because he felt guilty for what he paid me. It's the only one ever been built." Jerry is weathered and bleached like an old sea turtle, and his hands are held with the quiet confidence of someone who knows how to shape wood. Not a hobbyist, but a carpenter, a builder. A boat builder.

In the harbor I met another man, younger and lankier, also a carpenter by trade: Michael Cafferty from Connecticut, anchored nearby on his 28-foot Sea Sprite sloop. (Aboard a sub-30 foot boat, life becomes streamlined; everything not absolutely essential gets removed until you are left with a bed, a table, a seat for guests, a stove, a sink, perhaps an icebox and the cubic volume of the trunk of a mid-sized sedan in which to store clothes, food and other luxuries. My two years living aboard a boat of similar size was akin to living in a damp walk-in closet that never stopped moving. But the view was spectacular.) Beneath Michael's tangled, curly, brown hair shone eyes that revealed his lust for living. A crescent-moon smile graced his face, effervescing laughter. For years, Michael longed to go cruising, so he dodged committed relationships, saved his money and finally left home for the Abaco Islands of the Bahamas last November. He's been sailing ever since.

In foreign ports, he confronted the classic problems of every cruising sailor. Out of fresh water? Spend your afternoon in the dinghy with a few 5-gallon jerry cans, hunting for an unattended spigot. It's 3:30 in the morning, and you hear a suspicious noise? Crawl out of your warm bunk and slink on deck in your underwear to make sure your anchor isn't dragging. Need groceries? Carry as much as you can balance on the handlebars of your fold-up bicycle. The benefits, however, outnumber the drawbacks: Fish off your front porch. If you don't like your neighbors, just pull up your anchor. Every evening at sunset you get a front-row seat to the greatest light show on the planet, to say nothing of the unparalleled stargazing that follows it.

A solo sailor, Michael makes offshore hops from inlet to inlet. He tethers an egg timer to his life preserver so he can sneak a few winks on watch. His longest run, from St. Augustine to Charleston, was 30 hours. "I had told myself I was going to sleep as soon as I got in the inlet," he said to me over a pint at Poe's, "but,

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN WOLFE

you know, the adrenaline hit me, so I went ashore and had a few beers." The love affair between sailors and grog lives on.

Searching for an open stool, a generous pour and a pretty woman to make conversation with, Michael rambles over the ocean. Romance, he admits, is what brought him to the water in the first place. "I read "Dove" and that was it," said Michael of the Robin Lee Graham memoir about his round-the-world sailing adventure as a teenager. "The romance of it, the freedom, being able to meet other fun people. It's been incredible meeting people – fellow sailors are good folk."

Nola and Jerry have been cruising together for 21 years. The first decade was spent on the Pacific, making a living crewing aboard Neil Young's hundred-foot schooner. They met musicians they had grown up listening to, like David Crosby, and were treated to rare acoustic performances in the cockpit. Nola helped host parties where a "cheap" bottle of wine was anything under $30. She cooked elegant meals for the crowds of hungry musicians. "I think that's why Neil kept us on so long," chuckles Jerry. "He liked Nola's cooking."

Then Moonsong sailed down to Ecuador and Costa Rica before crossing through the Panama Canal. On the East Coast now for nearly 11 years, they've cruised everywhere between Venezuela and Nova Scotia. Nola showed me her collection of hand-stitched molas, the artisan craft of the Kuna people of the San Blas islands in Panama. Molas (which means bird plumage) are fabric panels, traditionally worn on the blouses of Kuna women, with colorful designs portraying fish, birds or geometrical patterns. Most of them were made by women, but there are a handful of albino men who, because of their lack of skin pigmentation, must stay inside out of the hot tropical sun. They make the most intricate molas of all, with stitches like the footprints of ants.

Like the tides, these visitors refresh our place, flood it with new ideas and experiences. Their presence ashore, when buying fish and bait at Motts Channel or restocking their iceboxes at Robert's Grocery and Monday's farmers market, wards off the cultural stagnation that is born from regional myopia. They are prophets of freedom and simplicity, of self-reliance, of reconnection to nature.

All they ask in return is a sandy bottom on which to anchor, and a place to tie up their dinghy. Updated shower facilities would be nice, suggests one cruiser, a Vonnegut fan who asked to be identified only as K. Trout. He invites me aboard M/V Traveller, a backyard-built 48-foot aluminum boat that looks more flying saucer than watercraft, hands me a beer and a Scopalomine patch. He uses them to counter seasickness as he leapfrogs up the coast. He's done 900 miles so far, single-handed, from Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas,

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heading home to Maryland.

He tells me about his friend Brindle, who was a safety diver with Jacques Cousteau. He tells me about one blurred evening at The Pineapple Bar, how in the bright morning the island's constable, whom he didn't remember meeting, told him, "It's good to see you sober." He tells me about having to wrestle a turtle while snorkeling, after accidentally swimming between the turtle and its mate. Apparently, the turtle thought he was a rival suitor.

For K. Trout, the Traveller transports him through space and time. "(Visiting Green Turtle Cay) is like going back to the 1950s," he says. "The people down there are still dependent on each other. You can't build the walls you build here." Like Vonnegut's other anti-hero, Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he has come "unstuck."

Land dwellers living in quiet neighborhoods on shaded avenues understand the frustration of uncourteous Corvettes speeding past, ignoring speed limits and scattering exhaust. Now imagine if your house rocked back and forth every time this happened. When weekend warriors whiz close by at full throttle on powerboats, sailors grimace. "It's like a dog marking its territory!" exclaims Larry Fansler, a white-haired cruiser who equally resembles Hemingway and Santa. "And they're dragging their kids behind them on a busy Saturday. I've never seen anything like it." (It's common knowledge on the water that sailors and motor boaters occasionally get on each other's nerves; a parallel friction found between people who drive souped-up sports cars and people who drive old Volkswagen Vanagons. The rivalry usually begins and ends with disgruntled fist-shaking, but occasionally the conflict escalates to profane utterances over Channel 16 or the cold shoulder at West Marine.)

Larry is a retired accountant and a licensed captain. He and his wife, Candy, sold their house, bought a boat and are now living their dream, cruising on their Pearson 367 Saphira out of Knoxville, Tennessee. They have arrived here by a circuitous course: down the Tennessee and Tom Bigby rivers, into the Mississippi — the jugular vein of America — then washing out into the Gulf of Mexico. Around the priapic protrusion known as Florida, they traveled up the Intracoastal Waterway to anchor out, finally, here. They are here for a family reunion in Topsail and are not sure where they're heading next. "If you schedule things (when you're cruising), that's where you get into trouble," advises Larry.

Transitioning from a house to a 36-foot boat would test any relationship. Candy says they've grown closer. "I always had a respect for him as a captain anyway, and in the last year that's grown even more. He's a good decision-maker." Larry laughs and says, "It's taught us more patience than

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we ever realized we had. We're in it together, and we have to work together to make it happen."

Back on the Moonsong, Jerry chuckles when I ask him the inevitable question about storms. "If you pick your season, and know the currents and the storms for that area, you're not going to see many," he says. "Most of the people we've talked to who've sailed around the world, they say occasionally they'll see a three-day storm. But hardly any more than that."

"However," interjects Nola, "when you don't (know the prevailing weather patterns), you hide out and you sneak out when the weather's clear. And we've done that. We left Ketchikan, Alaska, one time for the Inside Passage south, November first or second, and we got down to Cape Scott. And (the Canadian Weather Service) predicted 100-knot winds." Some perspective: that's comparable to 1996's Hurricane Fran, a category three that devastated Wrightsville Beach.

Nola continues, "We went way back in the islands—" ("up a fjord," Jerry says) "—and found a totally protected area and let two anchors out. We hid out and played cribbage. And we would have 60 knots every once in a while, and it would just go 'whoop!' and blow us over, but we were fine — no seas came in. When we went outside a day later, the moss had been blown off the rocks. The trees were like toothpicks."

It takes a great deal of courage to live a life removed from convenience, and like Thoreau in his little cabin, they live richer and deeper because of that. They crave the independence, the freedom, the ultimate wildness that life on a boat offers. To return to a landlocked life in society may smother that spark of self-sufficiency they worked so hard to kindle. They remind us there are customs of living beyond our own and that's OK. This Earth — and the water that covers it — is large enough for us all. They stand on the water and look upon land as the strange medium. Those critical questions: What is important to me? What do I value? Their answers are demonstrated in their own lives.

When viewed from the infinite ocean, Wrightsville is just one more beach town. And yet, Nola, Jerry, Michael, Larry, Candy and, of course, K. Trout have all anchored here. Perhaps to shed perspective, offer a glimpse of the sublime world beyond the city limit, that we locals often crave. By their presence they give the community great strength. They reveal to us what our own wild spirits can do.

So go talk to them. Motor or row (or better yet, sail) out to the anchorage. Knock gently on their hulls. Bring cold beer, open ears and open hearts to receive the wisdom of these water dwellers.

Captain John Wolfe is North Carolina essayist and mariner on a quest to experience sublimity. When he's not on the water, he wishes he was.

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Gone Girl

Nothing is ever quite the same from a distance – including how one looks at the world

By Virginia Holman

Midway through the year, I left my country for Costa Rica. Though I was only going on vacation for a couple of weeks, I phrased it to myself that way privately. I left my country for Costa Rica. Each time the sentence ran through my head, I heard it in the Colonial voice Meryl Streep used when she played Karen Blixen in "Out of Africa." Clearly, my brain had a sense of humor. A long, self-imposed exile seemed highly unlikely, yet I couldn't help myself. I spent a good bit of each vacation day musing about how I might feel about becoming an expat in my retirement years. How far might one's dwindling Social Security dollar go in Central America? It also felt pleasant to imagine I could become an expat right now, given this cruel year in the States.

I left my cellular phone service behind, and much of the internet save for the occasional free hotspot. I hoped physical distance and limited screen-time would lead to clarity or at least a reduction in the daily dread and anxiety of life in the States, stoked by our relentless, grinding news cycle. I knew I was only escaping for two weeks — and fortunate to be able to do so — but part of me truly wanted a more permanent arrangement. Yet how long could I, could anyone, exile themselves from our nation's griefs and still be truly American? Even though I wished to be far from the trumpeting politics and vile news that soaks through even the best days, I both love this nation and find it baffling in unequal and varying measures. I was on vacation, so I tried to push these uncomfortable and intrusive thoughts aside, but failed. I suppose I wanted to be in both places at once, away and at home. Yearning allowed me this, but also left me feeling a bit adrift, living in some in-between space that made the world seem like an illusion.

Have you ever felt this way? I noticed it most acutely this summer while hiking the mountain trails near the Continental Divide. The trails had few overlooks, which was fine since I was birding for trogons, three-wattled bellbirds and resplendent quetzals. The views were lush and a lack of vistas made it hard to keep my bearings; I had to look through the forest around me to glimpse the forested mountain slope below. Often my mind couldn't discern precisely what was seen. As I chased down the call of an emerald toucanet, I became slightly disoriented. I squinted. *Is that the horizon, or a cloud? Is that the canopy below me, or is it the reflection of trees in a woodland pond? Will a tumble off the trail's edge send me into the treetops or the water?*

I find the challenges of such shifting perceptions to be pleasurable or, at least, highly alluring when I'm in the wild. This year, I'd begun to feel a similar disorientation at home in the States, but it was not pleasurable. Instead, I felt alarmed. Citizens killed by police. Policemen killed by citizens. A citizen slaughtering other citizens enjoying a night on the town. The media provided graphic videos. I felt hollow inside. How was this my country? I longed for something hard to define. Escape, yes. But I also wanted something that I can only define as childish, nostalgic.

For me, this feeling has a place and time. It was my middle school library in Virginia, 1977. I was 11. In this library was a series of biographies of famous Americans; each book was the same size and shape as my church hymnal. The series was written for middle-grade readers (this was long before the phrase "young adult") and each story followed a similar heart-warming and satisfying arc. Those profiled, whether Harriet Tubman, Sacajawea, Nellie Bly or Thomas Edison, struggled mightily to realize a dream. There was heroism, a stalwart work ethic or genius. Always, there was — if not a fairytale-style happy ending — a victorious one.

I recall that I was deeply upset to read that Edison had his "ears boxed" by a train conductor, but Tubman's enslavement and Sacajawea's kidnapping did not register as crimes, as traumas. That information was presented as just a bit of context for the adventure story about to unfold. For months after reading Tubman's biography I would walk through our woods looking for moss growing on the north side of our coastal pines. That was the essential detail about the Underground Railroad and Tubman's story that stuck in my mind. Moss on the north side — the detail was so enchanting.

It should go without saying that these books were as scripted and similarly plotted as Nancy Drew mysteries. As an 11-year-old, I believed that each story was complete and unadulterated, and not in need of scrutiny or interpretation. Eventually, I finished reading the entire series; as intended, it seemed I understood something essential about America.

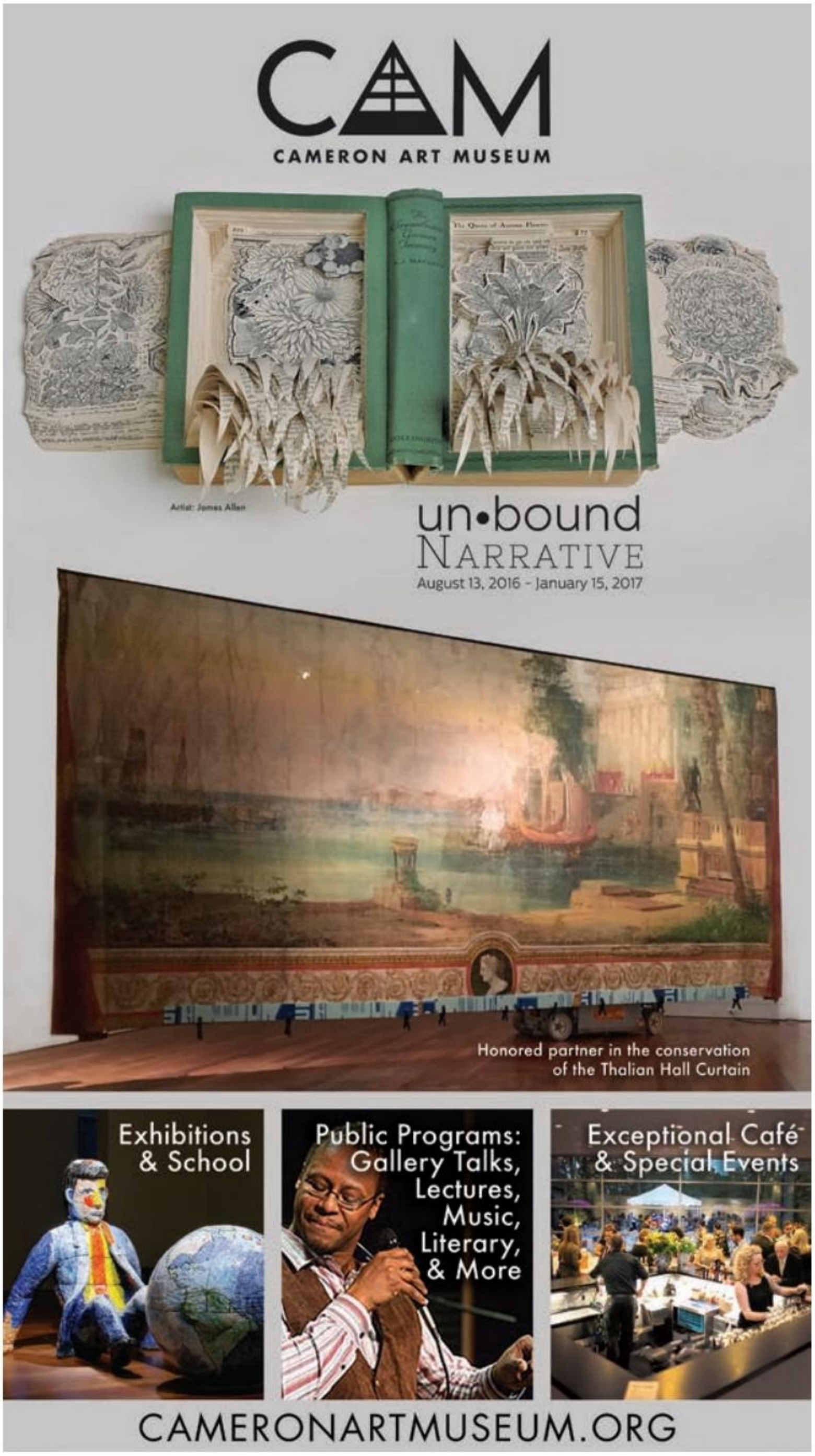
How I loved those stories. I recall having no horror that Tubman had been enslaved and beaten because so little of that information was included. When I read several uncensored versions years later, I was dismayed to discover the same America that produced such heroes also harmed many of them violently. Sacajawea was kidnapped at around age 12 by a rival tribe and later sold to a man who made her his wife. She bore a child. Soon after, she "joined" the Lewis and Clark expedition with her 2 1/2-month-old son strapped to her back. Is it possible that we still tell her story without also examining the crimes inflicted upon her? Tubman suffered a traumatic brain injury at the hand of her overseer that left her epileptic and prone to what she called "visions." It is said she claimed they helped her guide people to safety, but it also makes the violence done to her sound more like a backhanded gift than the true horror it was. In the children's versions of these stories, such unpleasantness was reduced to just a bit of backstory, where crimes and criminals were largely invisible. Perhaps the middle school biographies were expurgated to erase ancestral guilt. Perhaps it was to shield children from brutal truths that we as adults seem incapable of comprehending.

Even so, some part of me clung to the children's version of the biographies because those stories provided such strongly remembered feelings: a sense of possibility, empowerment and comfort.

Hiking along the Continental Divide, I grappled with the memory of those deliberately incomplete narratives, with how I feel about this terrible moment in our nation, with my atavistic urge for a sense of security, and with what it means to live and sacrifice to maintain democracy. While stumbling and confused in the clouds, I understood that my longed-for security, indeed my longed-for nation, never existed the way I'd imagined as a girl, and I'd never feel that way again. Oddly, this made me hopeful. I didn't need to run away or ignore the perpetual assault of news. Instead, I started to shed what is truly dangerous: my fear of losing the narrative I was offered as a benighted child and my desire to be immune to our painful, national struggle. The only surety rests within me, and within each of us and this democracy that we continue to build with one another.

I had a nice trip. Then I came home to my big, messy country, ready to get to work.

Author Virginia Holman, a regular Salt *columnist, teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.*



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Hole In the Sky

Nothing, or nearly so,
These thin molecules of air,
Water vapor collected
So high it's crystalized,
The ice of a cirrus cloud
Lit by reflected light
And the slant of evening sun
Rendering this whole blue nothing
Something.
Then the hand, old, instinctively wise,
Darting across toned paper,
The scratch, scratch of a pastel . . .

There! Do you see it?
A hole in the sky!

Sometimes,
If we push hard
Against the skin of the world,
It will give enough
To allow us a moment, nearly nothing,
Maybe, but something,
Even if it's just a hole in the sky
That calls us to remember,
Then shows us
Why we do what we do.

–Bob Wickless

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The Artist's House

A Wonderland in Winoca

By Isabel Zermani · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Tucked up in the Historic District, in an area called Wincoa Terrace, around a curve — one side woods, one side homes — sits a Spanish-style house with a walled garden belonging to the artist Katherine Wolf Webb. "Winoca" was named in 1912 by an 11-year-old girl who won a citywide contest. It's a contraction of "Wilmington, North Carolina," and is sometimes spelled "Wi-No-Ca," as if a chemical composition. This origin thrills Webb, whose house and life teems with delightful creations, wildlife — real and papier mâché — and a legacy of love.

From the street, the saffron stucco and the red tile roof stand out. The same elements echo on the larger neighbor, a Spanish Colonial house built in 1930 by former State Sen. Emmett H. Bellamy. These two structures form a tiny Mediterranean enclave all their own.

A wrought iron gate opens into the "wild wildflower garden," Webb tells me. A bed of sprawling yellow lantana, black-eyed Susans and purple coneflowers enchant our long walk to the front door. An escort of butterflies trails us. Along the way I spy lady's tresses, a wild orchid Webb foraged from a roadside. Across the yard, a hedge of lime hydrangeas boast their unspoiled pom-poms, hydrated by sheer sorcery. A large sculptural branch sits by the door — Webb's wand?

Look out above! A paper lantern owl greets us in the foyer, claws first; it's an original work by Webb recently exhibited at the Cameron Art Museum. The internal light source silhouettes intricately cut feathers. There are real owls too, "that live two trees down," Webb offers to show me. There's tons of wildlife in the nearby cemetery, "deer, coyote, foxes, a peacock," she replies when I ask if she longs for more country space. She's got plenty and is in tune with all of it, scooting two black and white dogs with wispy ears out the front to chase lizards so we can retire to the walled garden.

Enclosed on three sides by the house and a wall on the other, this private space is truly the heart of the home.

Tropical plants abound. "Begonias, begonias," Webb points to each different species, "I love begonias." She laughs off that they are one of the only things blooming at the moment, except for one unspeakably romantic hosta whose lavender-white blossom emerges like a slippered foot beneath a green gown. Palms, climbing ferns, caladium, hibiscus, citrus trees, Japanese maples — both weeping and not — love the shady southern exposure.

POOL

For her next art show, Webb's developing a "goofy" botanical installation that looks pretty from afar, but on second look reveals hidden snakes and bugs. Upstairs, her sculpture of a anhinga drying its wings has feathers shaped like laundry: pants, pajama tops and bras. The artist in her relishes a sense of theater. Indeed, both her art and home require scrutiny to absorb the levels of her creations.

True of the courtyard as well, at one angle we're in Barcelona, at another, a jungle. Mirrors and gazing balls add to the ever-shifting sense of space. A circulatory system of multiple water features bubbling throughout the garden provides a hypnotic sense of calm.

A hummingbird zips in to drink.

Bossy Carolina wrens hop around the rungs of a feeder, forming a little brown feathered security system. The backyard holds a chicken coop with Blossom, Blanche and Bloomy, who spring into the front yard on good behavior in exchange for eating all the bugs. Nearby, blue swallowtail caterpillars worthy of Wonderland munch on scrumptious fennel.

Just inside the courtyard doors, more tropical plants thrive in pots, lending the dining room the feel of an atrium. Cool-to-the-touch travertine floors span the ground level. An accent wall recalls the saffron color of the exterior. The sideboard was fashioned from a 1930s wooden diving board, and the textured tablecloth had a former life as a bedspread. In an artist's house, everything gets a second life.

Local lore has it that the house, built in 2006 by the builder John Wallace, was a love letter to his wife, who has "Brazilian ties," says Webb, which could explain the Spanish Colonial inspiration. "This is pure rumor," she qualifies, but even if fiction, the house feels like a love letter.

Webb and her late husband, Richard Beverly Raney Webb, a retired attorney known by his second name, purchased the house in 2010. They added an elevator and closed in the garage for her studio. A separate upstairs apartment was integrated back into the house for a small works studio. Detail and care had been built into this house, and Webb brought her artist's eye and ingenuity to the rest of it. She replaced the previously black countertops with a restful light stone and aligned the kitchen island between the arched doorways. In one genius move, she added a divider on the island hiding the sink from the

entertaining side, so guests can't see the dirty dishes. Running her bed and breakfast, Hillsborough House Inn (in Hillsborough, North Carolina), for 10 years clearly yielded some wisdom.

The Inn, a family house called "Belle Vue," was a 1790 Italianate mansion, scene of many weddings and honeymoons, and had the great fortune to be located across the street from Nancy Goodwin's famous Montrose Gardens. "How lucky can you get?" Webb marvels.

Many of the antique gems in the "Wi-No-Ca" house" come from another family house, once across the street from the State Capitol. The clear, beveled leaded glass windows, the hand-carved mantelpiece, the crystal chandelier above the staircase, even the wrought iron gate out front were all rescued from Beverly's family home in downtown Raleigh when, like many great houses — too big to use, to insure, "so grand, nobody knows what to do with them" — it was torn down in the 1950s. Beverly's mother had the presence of mind to salvage and store these and other pieces created in, arguably, the height of American craftsmanship.

Beverly's grandfather, Richard Beverly Raney, built that house in 1900 for his bride, Kate Denson Raney (of Claudis Baker Denson lineage), as the story goes, on their honeymoon, in complete secrecy. He walked her inside their home at 102 Hillsborough St. when the house was completely finished and furnished — down to the silver. The love in that gesture rings on. By the front door hang chimes previously used by "the butler to call you down to dinner," now endless amusement for Webb's grandchildren. Her three now-grown sons, Bo, John and Jim, likely rang them too.

The items and the legacy of love traveled with Webb and Beverly Webb through each house: nearly 30 years in Charlotte, 10 in Hillsborough, 10 in Edenton and now 10 in Wilmington. Every objet d'art has an aesthetic and sentimental value, such as orange-and-pink Turkish tribal rugs the Webbs bought in a windfall shortly after they were married in 1963, when they "wanted something truly beautiful."

An abstract watercolor by Keith Crown introduces the color palette of the house: Bright orange, turquoise and black-and-white patterns serve as a refrain throughout. White on black polka dots, checks, squiggly stripes on small rugs, black and white patterns punctuate this house. Upstairs, an Asian-influenced guest room showcases a wall painted with black leaves. Two striped rugs carry us down the hall to the master bedroom. Most imposing is the hand-carved, four-poster bed; it came with the house. Too large to move, Webb softened it with pale robin's egg-blue paint. Now, it belongs in her happy castle. From the bedside, one can roll over and gaze into the elevator, home to singing zebra finches. Webb can call them from floor to floor, to keep her company — black and white tails, orange cheeks and all.

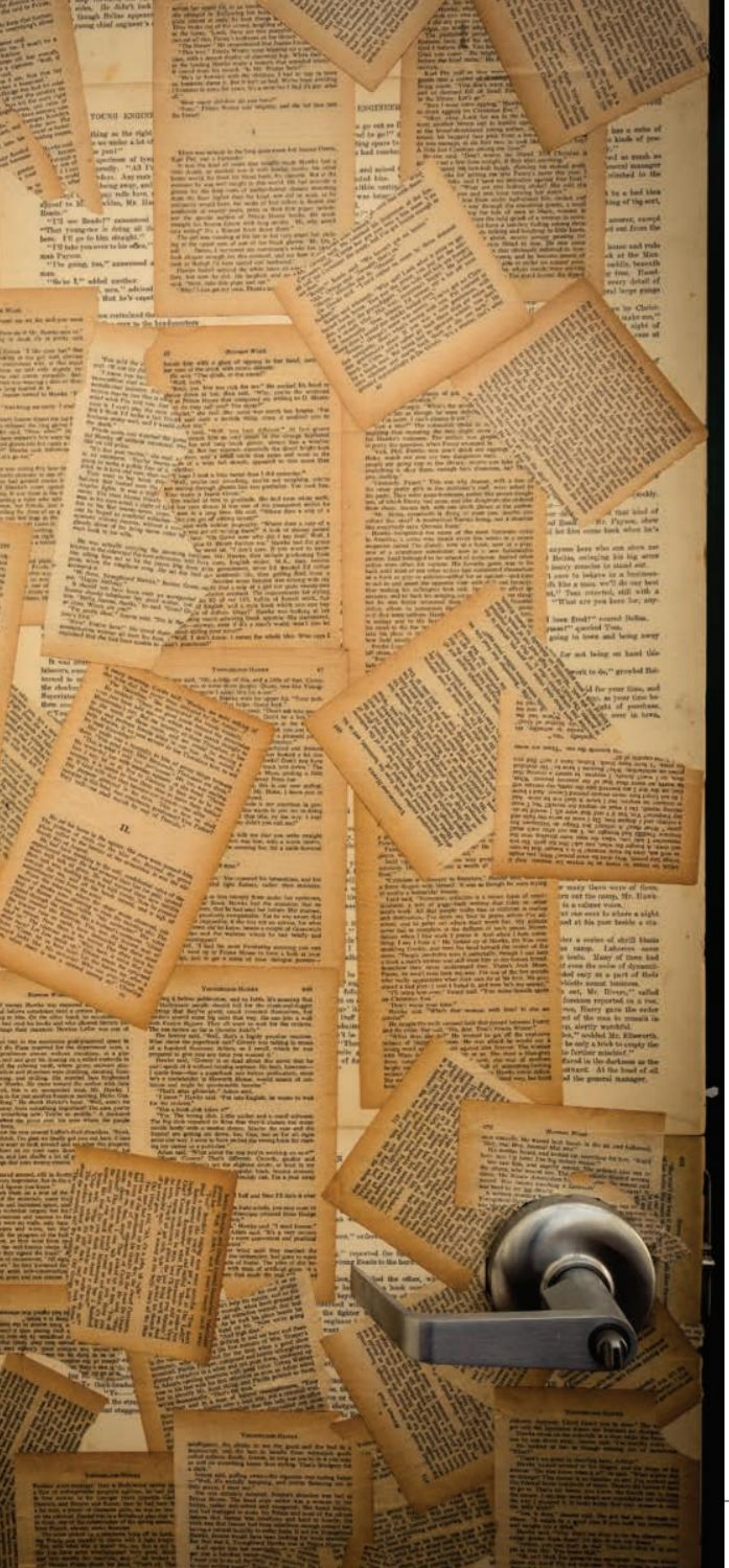
Because of the eclectic décor, an outsider may not realize that most of the art is Webb's: large-scale painted landscapes that evoke Cy Twombly and Monet, Calder-esque mobiles and small collages. "I don't have a quote unquote style, probably a determent to my quote unquote success," she says with a laugh. She has shown all over the state and beyond, mounted solo shows at Davidson College and Queens College, won plenty of awards and sold art to nearly every film and TV show to come through this town. And yet, she maintains a certain shyness and humility. Webb is reluctant to promote herself, and requests for her résumé practically require a search party. For her, it's about the making.

"I've always been creative," she explains. "I've always painted and sewed and worked in the garden, dug ponds, built Indian tents when I was little, camped out, made big fires — things kids probably can't do today."

A prolific creator, she established a space that allows her to work however she's compelled to. The upstairs studio begets small works and the downstairs studio, large paintings. Webb jokes that she's ADD, but explains, "I have to be doing something or I'm just not happy." And happiness is paramount for her art and home; "It's got to be to my sensibility."

A quirky, enchanting, lovely sensibility. An art professor at Hollins, where Webb completed her undergraduate studies, once challenged her, asking "Does it have to be pretty?" The artist gives me a look. "The answer was 'Yes!'"

STORIES by O. HENRY
Zelda fitzgerald The Collected Works
TRAIL OF TEARS
Killer Diller Clyde Edgerton
THE MARROW OF TRADITION CHESTNUTT
a land more kind than home WILEY CASH
ORSON SCOTT CARD
ENDER'S GAME
THE SHIP'S CAT JOCK BRANDIS



The Top Shelf

A book lover's ultimate Aerie

By Ashley Wahl

Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Old Books on Front Street is Wonderland for the Literati if ever there was one. Cozy reading nooks, beer and wine, bar stools made from threadbare novels, and as the sandwich board on the sidewalk has proclaimed over the years, "over two miles of books" lining custom pine shelves laid out in such a way that browsing them feels like walking a sacred labyrinth.

And then there's Gwenyfar. Imagine Lewis Carroll's Alice, Rowling's Hermione, and Harper Lee's Scout (minus the fist fights) rolled into one and all grown up — a character unlike anyone you have ever met outside the pages of a book. With her rosy complexion and cascading golden locks, the literary muse of Front Street looks like she might have been plucked from a Botticelli painting, even though she's dressed in a "Save Trees, Buy Old Books" T-shirt and jeans. But one conversation with the 36-year-old writer and voracious reader reveals her encyclopedic memory and whimsical nature. She's far too modest to admit it, but Gwenyfar Rohler is the magic and gumption behind this beloved place, and like the bookshop, which her family purchased from original owner Dick Daughtry in the mid-2000s, everything she touches is a perfect reflection of her playful brilliance and unconventional spirit.

Take, for example, The Top Shelf: A Literary Loft, the near-finished lodging establishment located in the apartment above Old Books on Front Street, where walls were literally framed around boxes of books.

"Did you ever read *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler,* by E.L. Konigsburg?" asks Gwenyfar. She sits thought-

DOUBLE LETTER SCORE
DOUBLE WORD SCORE
TRIPLE LETTER SCORE

fully on the vintage Naugahyde futon in The Top Shelf's sunny living space, her face lightly flushed with summer heat, her black shirt spattered with white paint.

"No," I admit. "I've never read it."

"It's about two little kids who run away from home to go live at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," says Gwenyfar, who is perhaps the only soul on this planet that I could imagine having actually attempted this feat as a child. "I'm kind of trying to create the adult version of that here . . . that feeling of discovery."

Hence the 15-by-15-foot grid painted on the floor that resembles a life-size Scrabble board; the sweeping kitchen mural celebrating North Carolina's vast and surprising cast of famous writers; the whimsical staircase with 26 risers painted to look like spines of books.

Six years after the Rohler family moved Old Books from 22 North Front to its current location at 249 North Front (the former building was condemned), Gwenyfar's dream of opening a quirky hideaway for serious book lovers to spend a night (or a week) is being realized. Beginning in October, guests will be able to reserve the 1,200-square-foot space, which includes full kitchen, bathroom, private room with queen-sized bed, and an open living space complete with Murphy wall bed, futon and a bird's-eye view of Front Street.

"It's been a process," says Gwenyfar, whose next chapter began in 2010 when she and her ailing father, the late Lloyd Rohler, were forced to find a new home for the bookshop just seven months after the untimely death of Gwenyfar's mother, Diana Rohler. Three hundred volunteers helped move their entire inventory into storage — "I felt like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*," says Gwenyfar — and Old Books was held in the collective heart of the community during the property search and the extensive renovation that would follow.

"I'd walked through every available piece of commercial

real estate from Seventeenth Street to the river and from Dawson to Red Cross, and narrowed it down to about three or four spaces to show Daddy," says Gwenyfar. "He was not well."

No sooner did they make an offer on one of the buildings than a phone call from Mayor Bill Saffo opened a new door — that of 249 North Front St., a century-old two-story building in need of some major TLC.

"It was probably the nicest and the fastest real estate negotiation in the history of the world," says Gwenyfar. "The Saffos sold us the building for less than the tax value, and I don't think I'm being too sentimental or self-congratulatory when I say that I think an awful lot of it had to do with the fact that they were happy with who the building was going to. The building never came on the market."

The first floor had to be completely gutted, a project that revealed a mysterious half-floor when the drop ceiling was removed.

"Have you seen 'Being John Malkovich'?" Gwenyfar laughs, referring to the film's bizarre 7 1/2 floor. "We have one too."

Upstairs, above what is now the giant word game — "Legally I can't say that it's a Scrabble board because I don't have the license," says Gwenyfar — a collapsed roof needed immediate repair, and since a rickety spiral staircase at the back of the building was neither safe nor functional, a front staircase was added during the renovation.

"We didn't have the time or money to play with the other problems upstairs," says Gwenyfar. "Downstairs was the priority. We needed Old Books to be open for business."

Following a nine-month renovation, Old Books reopened. Gwenyfar decided to complete the second floor sans contractor — and she wouldn't borrow a dime to do it.

"Every time we could get together $500, we could do a $500 project," she says. "I didn't care if it took us 10 years."

As Gwenyfar leads her guest up a staircase of oversized books penned by North Carolina authors, she recounts the accidental discovery of two 32-foot-long vaults beneath the building.

"We thought this part of the building was on grade," she begins, "but the guy who was cutting tile to pour the footer fell through the floor and into one of the vaults. Thank God he was neither killed nor maimed, because he truly could have been."

As it turned out, the building was a soda fountain during Prohibition. Kegs would have been smuggled in through the back window of the second floor, rolled to the front of the building via the sloped half-floor, and then stored beneath the building in the cool, deep vaults.

Following her father's death in 2014, Gwenyfar began devoting much of her time to renovating the apartment space.

From the top of the stairs, the heart pine floors that stretch from the kitchen to the main living space gleam in the mid-morning light.

"I did all the refinishing, mostly with a palm sander on my hands and knees," says Gwenyfar. "And I'd never seen wood drink polyurethane like that before. Six coats and it still could probably use two more."

She also hand-primed and painted the bead-board ceiling.

"At one point I actually had an entire bucket of paint fall off a ladder onto my head. It's so shocking when something like that happens. Your first concern is to not go blind."

Although Gwenyfar has spent countless painstaking hours sanding, painting and measuring every square inch of the space above the bookshop — no easy task, especially when "nothing in this building is square" — she avoids dwelling on her personal sacrifices, instead shifting focus to what she calls the "big splash pieces" and to the folks who helped her breathe this vision to life.

"This room looked like something out of a Cold War-era spy film," says Gwenyfar of the bedroom. "Or a torture chamber. It was just this dark, awful, walled-in thing."

That is, until framing carpenter Jeremy Bradford suggested adding nine transom windows in the walls (plus one in the bathroom) to bring natural light "all the way through the space."

The windows — book-themed stained glass panels done by a Baltimore artist Gwenyfar has long admired — are among the loft's most striking features.

Ditto the kitchen mural, done by artist Jill Webb, which features a map of North Carolina writers.

"Part of what I'm trying to do is expose people to writers they didn't realize were from here," explains Gwenyfar. "You'd be amazed by how many people still don't realize that Orson Scott Card lives in North Carolina."

Of the 26 book spines that make up the staircase, only one hasn't been a *New York Times* best-seller: *The Ship's Cat*, by Jock Brandis, who just so happens to be married to Gwenyfar Rohler.

"He's put so much into this building," says Gwenyfar of Brandis, film gaffer, founder of Full Belly Project, and general handyman.

She points out the kitchen cabinets, Harbor Freight workbenches, $150 apiece.

"Jock redid the drawer runners," says Gwenyfar. "He made the metal base for the old farm sink. He put a threaded rod bolt through the bottom of the kitchen table so that the base is secure . . ."

And when they needed a mattress to fit the Murphy wall bed, they found one made-in-North Carolina at Harrell's Department Store, managed by one of Jock's old pals from the movie business.

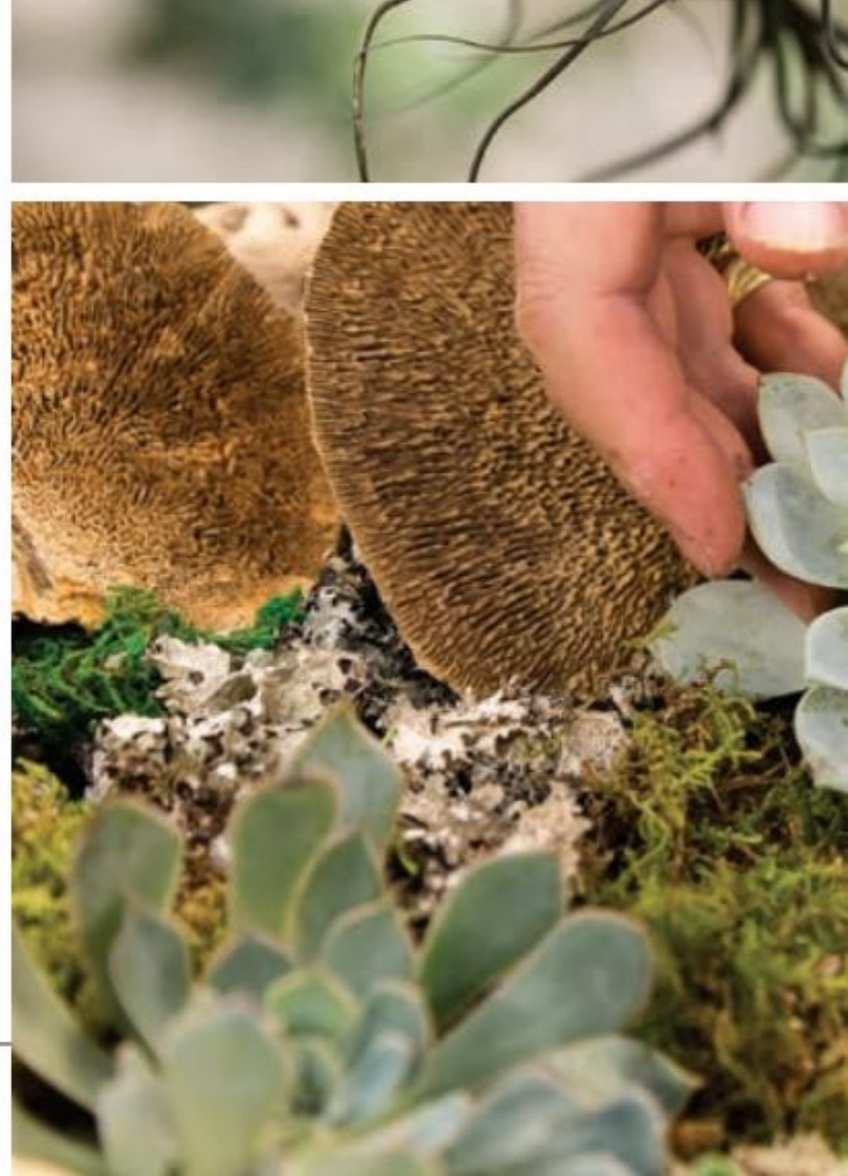
"This is how Wilmington is like LA: The guy doing the tile was in 'Doctor Strangelove'," says Gwenyfar of local actor Jon Stafford, who did the bathroom floor and kitchen backsplash.

"He built the shower entirely," adds Gwenyfar. "Jon is, honest to God, one of the most talented actors I've ever known in my life. Whatever Jon does, he does it wholly, and he does it with intense focus. You can see it in his stage work and, I've got to say, you see it in his tile work."

Granted, the furnishing and appliances are a bit of a mishmash for a rental. Gwenyfar snagged the bedroom dresser from Grace Street. The doors came from E.W. Godwin's Sons Lumber. The old church pew that now serves as a sofa belonged to the electrician. The wooden shelf in the kitchen (built by Jock) once displayed books downstairs. But like Old Books itself, The Top Shelf has that playful, carefree spirit that makes you want to stay for days.

For more information about The Top Shelf, visit www.thetopshelfaliteraryloft.com. Join Gwenyfar for the opening party on September 28, 6-8 p.m., 249 North Front St., Wilmington.

Ashley Wahl was formerly Salt*'s beloved senior editor. She now resides in a small town in the hills just outside of Asheville, perfecting her music and other gifts of the spirit.*



Beyond the Garden Wall

Garden designer Kim Fisher's nature-based creations bring the outdoors inside with magical results

By Barbara J. Sullivan · Photographs by Mark Steelman

A few blocks from the Eiffel Tower, attached to the outer wall of the Musée du Quai Branly, rises an almost 40-foot vertical garden — a tapestry of mosses, ferns, saxifrages, perennial geraniums, grasses and dozens of other small plants. This is one of the first and perhaps the most iconic of the magnificent vertical gardens that are now sprouting up in cities all over the world. People respond instinctively to this display of living art in part because it changes every day in some subtle way and combines endlessly fascinating shapes, colors and textures, but also because just walking by it is a way to connect with the natural world and experience a degree of well-being.

"Green walls" — indoors and outdoors — are becoming popular now on a smaller scale for hotels, businesses and homes. The drawbacks are that they require ample sunlight and a sizable investment of time and plant expertise. Because most of the plants in these wall gardens absorb water by way of roots clambering through the shallow pockets of soil — and because that soil needs a regular drenching — this also limits their suitability for indoor spaces. If only we could all share our living rooms with such glorious fronds and tendrils all woven together into a living wall fabric. A potted palm doesn't have quite the same effect.

Working off this idea of nature-as-art as well as the sense that bringing the natural world into our living spaces can feed a much-needed connection, designer Kim Fisher of Wilmington has been experimenting with how to offer smaller, more manageable living gardens for her customers' walls and table tops. She and her husband, Morgan Biggerstaff, combine a love of natural forms with a keen eye for line, structure and texture to create small vignettes of natural beauty that can be loved and lived with, with minimal maintenance. These scaled down mini-environments come either pre-planted or in a form that invites the homeowner to use his or her imagination — better yet, to roam around in the woods and find something to complete the design. Their circular, aluminum and acrylic wall garden containers, for example, have just that kind of adaptability — they can be filled with any number of pleasing plant combinations. This has proved to be such a smart idea that several of their wall gardens now grace the Google headquarters.

As a child growing up in Bethesda, Maryland, Fisher spent many hours outdoors foraging for leaves, branches, vines, dried seed pods and all manner of organic goodies for her mother, who fashioned wreaths and garlands from them. Later, Fisher's natural design sense plus several years

of hands-on training in the flower business led her into a successful career as a flower designer. Working in Washington, D.C., and traveling across the country, she provided flower arrangements for lavish events, designer show-houses, celebrity homes and even handled the Christmas décor for the vice presidential mansion.

In 2000, a couple of years after moving to Wilmington, she started her own business designing flowers for weddings and large events as well as for TV and film productions. Even though most of what she provided for her clients came from the bright, colorful and ephemeral world of cut flowers, she never lost her passion for wandering outdoors in search of the more subtle and unexpected treasures nature might offer up. And with luck, her outdoor discovery might come and live inside for a while as part of one of her new creations. On one expedition she came across a fallen log, mushrooms forming ruffled ledges in perfect progression along its length. With the addition of a few silver votive candles, this became a unique, earthy Christmas decoration. Slices of tree trunk, bark and all, were transformed into wall-mounted candle sconces.

Under Biggerstaff's skillful workmanship, long twists of grey driftwood, fitted out with swatches of hand-stenciled white and indigo cloth, have become sailboats. And, on a larger scale, the couple created an arbor of willow branches that can be interlaced with fresh hydrangea blossoms and greenery to fashion a fantasy wedding bower.

They've begun offering these nature-based design elements under the moniker "Coastal Terra" through Fisher's website, their Etsy store, Instagram, Facebook and two farmers markets: Wrightsville Beach and Sunset Beach. Fisher still loves doing weddings, as the allure of fresh flowers is universal for any celebration, but she's adding more. "I'm interested in what you do after the wedding," she says. How can people bring the beauty of nature into their new homes? "Everyone nests," she says. And she wants to help with that.

Being an avid gatherer, she has a secret cache of moss, which she takes great pleasure in visiting. Soft, green, moss-wrapped balls, filled with soil and tied with string (kokedama), are one of her favorite minimalist gardens. The orbs can be populated with succulents, air plants, a staghorn fern — any low-maintenance plant that will accommodate the rigors of indoor living. With adequate sunlight and a minimum amount of maintenance, the kokedama provides a self-contained ecosystem for even the smallest space. You can admire it hanging from a string, catching a shaft of sunlight, or nestling serenely in the limbs of a small tripod fashioned from cut tree branches.

People have been planting indoor gardens in the form of terrariums for centuries. Fisher likes to use old-fashioned glass apothecary jars, add the sparkle of cracked geodes, the delicate fans and mazes of bleached coral and a scattering of *Tillandsias*, or air plants, which will thrive with minimal attention since they need no soil to root in. Her favorite at the moment is *T. tectorum*, a diminutive whitish-green whirlwind of a plant that looks like a wild-haired Dr. Seuss character ready to fly away on the slightest breeze.

Although she's already very busy, Fisher has lots of ideas up her sleeve for what she wants to do next. She'll be offering workshops for people who want to learn how to use natural materials for indoor design, how to craft wreaths and garlands and how to create these intimate indoor gardens. She wants to share her passion and expertise so that people can be in touch with the seasonal treasures they so often overlook in their busy lives. She will continue her love of making visible the hidden art forms growing quietly all around us and urges others to join in the pleasure of the discovery.

Barbara J. Sullivan is a regular contributor to Salt *and our authority on air plants.*

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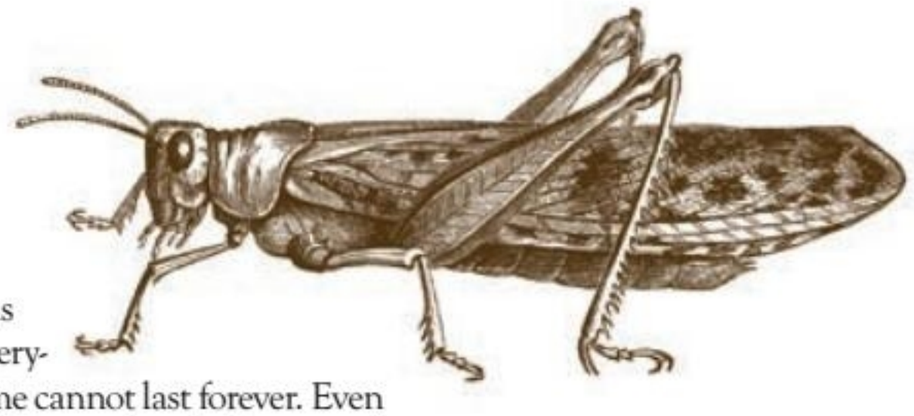
September

By Ash Alder



"The crickets felt it was their duty to warn everybody that summertime cannot last forever. Even on the most beautiful days in the whole year — the days when summer is changing into autumn — the crickets spread the rumor of sadness and change."
E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

The full Harvest Moon — also called the Singing Moon — will rise at approximately 7:30 p.m. on Friday, September 16. Owing to its close proximity to the horizon, the moon will appear vast and orange-colored. Don't be surprised if you get the sudden urge to dance beneath it.

Also, because this month's harvest includes the first plump grapes, the harvest moon is alternatively known as the Wine Moon. Red wine pairs well with Neil Young's *Harvest* (1972) and *Harvest Moon* (1992). Should you feel inspired to drink from a sterling goblet while dancing on this brilliant night, consider offering a small libation to Dionysus, the Greek god of winemaking and ritual madness.

Asters (also called Italian starwort or Michaelmas Daisy) are the birth flower of September, their daisy-like blooms a talisman of love and symbol of patience. The ancient Greeks burned aster leaves to ward off evil spirits, and the plant was sacred to both Roman and Greek deities. Those familiar with the hidden language of flowers will tell you that a gift of asters reads:

Take care of yourself for me, Love.

Plant your garlic now until the first hard freeze — the earlier the better, as large root systems are key. Although it won't be ready for harvest until next June, growing your own garlic means you'll be well equipped for cold (and collard) season next fall. Aside from boosting your immune system and enhancing your sautéed greens, garlic, researchers believe, can reduce the risk of various cancers. Roast a head until tender and add it to your rosemary mashed potatoes and squash casseroles.

This month, with the sun entering Libra (the Scales) on the autumnal equinox, we look to Nature and our gardens to remind us of our own need for balance and harmony. On Thursday, September 22, day and night will exist for approximately the same length of time. Mid-morning, when the astrological start of autumn occurs, take a quiet moment for introspection. In the fall, just as kaleidoscopes of monarchs descend for nectar before their mystical pilgrimage to Mexico, we must prepare to journey inward. Breathe in the beauty of this dreamy twilight — this sacred space between abundance and decay. The duality of darkness and light is essential to all of life.

Tolkien fans have double the reason to celebrate the equinox. In 1978, the American Tolkien Society proclaimed the calendar week containing September 22 as Tolkien Week. In J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, hobbits Bilbo and Frodo Baggins were both said to be born on September 22; Bilbo in the year of 2890, Frodo in 2968 (refer to the Shire calendar of Tolkien's fictional Middle-earth).

This year, since Hobbit Day officially falls on the first day of autumn, consider hosting a grand birthday feast — call it Second Breakfast if you'd like — with a menu showcasing the bounty of the season. Decorate with ornamental corn, squash and gourds. Since no hobbit meal is complete without ale, mead or wine, you'll want to have plenty. Punctuate the evening with fresh-baked apple pie.

Alternatively, you might celebrate Hobbit Day by walking barefoot on the earth, a simple meditation practice with remarkable health benefits. If you've never heard of barefoot healing, check out Clinton Ober's *Earthing* (2010) or Warren Grossman's *To Be Healed by the Earth* (1999). Think about it: If the average hobbit lives about 100 years, they must be doing something right.

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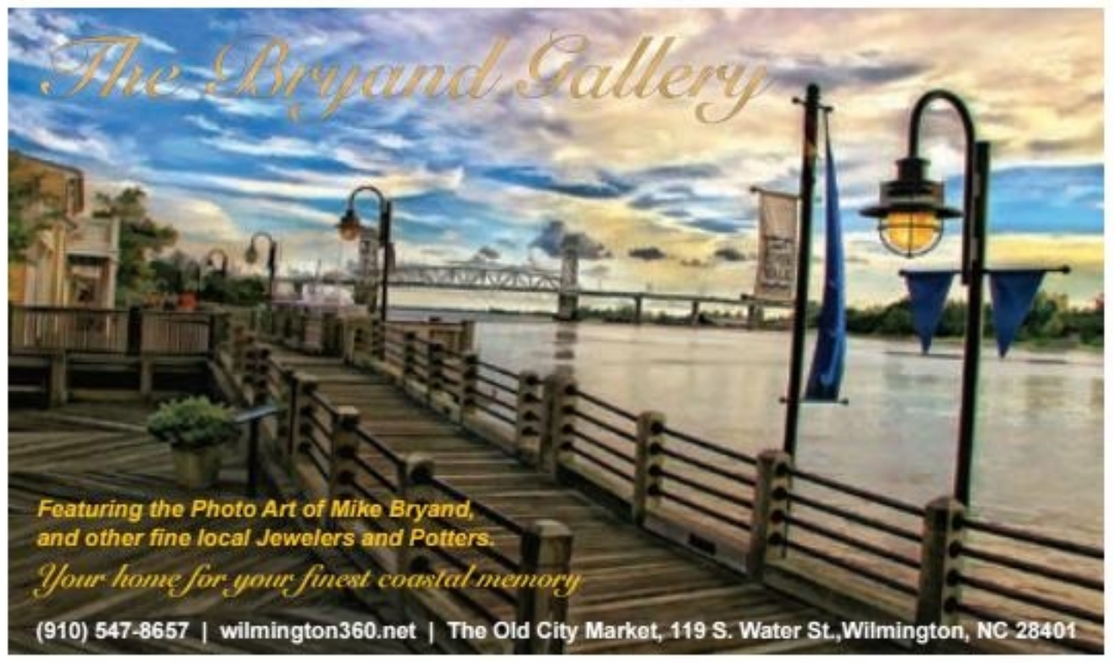
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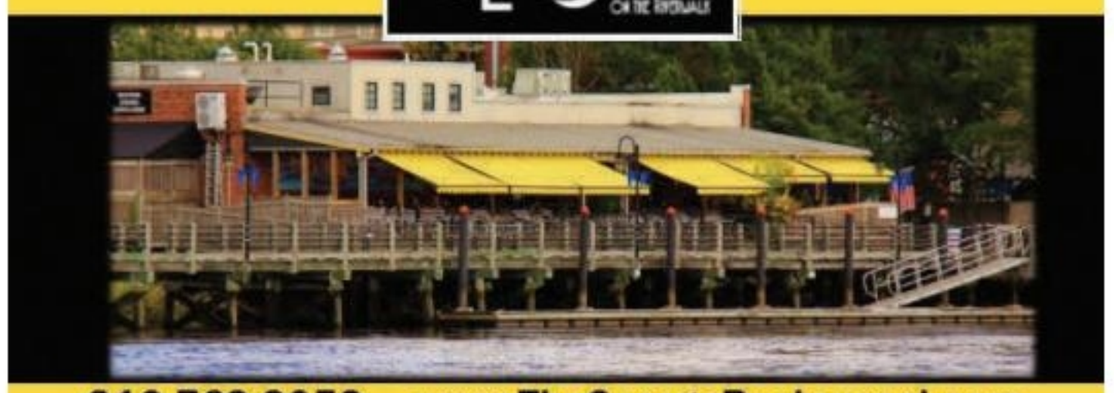

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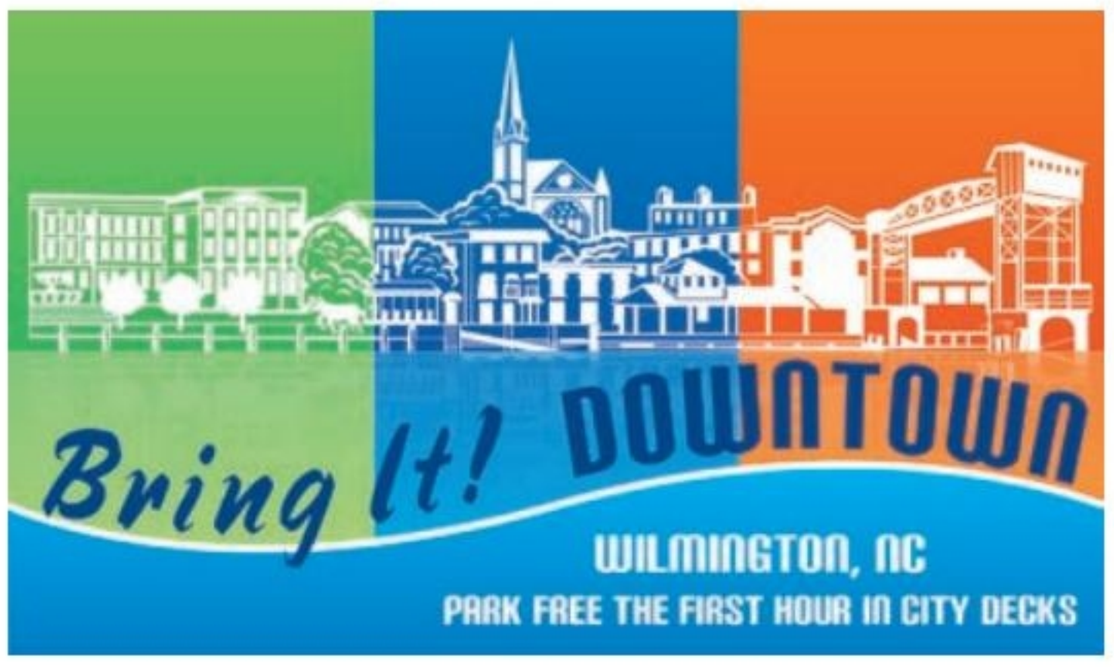

Arts Calendar

Weird Al Yankovic Live

9/8

N.C. Shell Show

9/17-18

Nikoleta Rallis Gala Concert

9/23

9/2 Jammie Jam
5 p.m. Evening pajama party where children can play board games, make a dream catcher, have snacks, and listen to a bedtime story with their favorite stuffed animal. Admission: $9.75. Children's Museum of Wilmington, 116 Orange St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

9/2 Airlie Concert
6–8 p.m. Shine joins the Airlie Gardens summer concert series performing covers and electro acoustic music. Food and wine available for purchase. Admission: $2–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.airliegardens.org.

9/2 & 3 Dinner Theatre
7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Joel Finsel's "Cocktails & Conversations," a show about the things you can learn about people from what they order to drink. Admission: $17–37. TheatreNOW, 19 South 10th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or theatrewilmington.com.

9/3 Go Jump in the Lake 5K
8:30 a.m. 5K, 10K and 1-mile fun run where participants are encouraged to jump in Spring Lake at the finish line. Admission: $10–35. Proceeds benefit the New Hope Clinic. Spring Lake Park, Pine Road & North Lake Road, Boiling Spring Lakes. Info: (910) 232-7532 or its-go-time.com/go-jump-in-the-lake.

9/3 Arts and Crafts Festival
9 a.m. Arts Festival held by the Oak Island Art Guild featuring regional artists, craft exhibitors and food vendors. Middleton Park Extension Soccer Field, 46th St. and Dolphin Drive, Southport. Info: (910) 448-1016 or www.oakislandartguild.org/arts-crafts-festival.

9/4 Boogie in the Park
5–7 p.m. The Central Park Band joins the "Boogie in the Park" summer concert series performing classic rock, pop and dance. Bring blankets and snacks. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Ave., Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

9/4 Movie at the Lake
8:45 p.m. Family-friendly outdoor movie screening of "The Peanuts Movie" (2015, G, 88 min.) by the lake. Popcorn, soda and candy available for purchase. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureisland.org.

9/5 Word Weavers
7–9 p.m. A Christian writer's group, that strives to mentor writers by offering critiques, workshops and retreats and keeping members informed about conferences and writing opportunities. Life Point Church, 3534 S. College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 619-7344 or sondradron@bellsouth.net.

9/7 Birding Kayak Adventure
Join Wild Bird & Garden and Mahanaim Adventures for a birding and kayaking excursion at the Rachel Carson Estuarine Reserve. Kayaking equipment and guide included. Registration required. Admission: $90. Rachel Carson Estuarine Reserve, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/8 Migration Program and Native Plant Sale
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden for a free program on fall migration and learn how birds travel and move to secure wintering grounds and feeding sites. Pick up tips on the types of birds expected to move through our region, and the best areas to see them. After the program, check out the native plant sale on the porch. Admission: Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E. Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/8 Epicurean Evening
5:30–9 p.m. More than 30 local chefs participate in a culinary extravaganza to benefit Methodist Home for Children. Includes a live and silent auction, a REEDS champagne toast and epicurean awards. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 471-6088 or www.wilmingtonee.com.

9/8 Jazz at the Mansion
6:30–8:30 p.m. El Jaye Johnson and The Port City All-Stars close the "Jazz at the Mansion" concert series on the Bellamy lawn. Beer and wine cash bar on-site. Admission: $12. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

9/8 Weird Al Yankovic Live
7:30 p.m. American parodist and singer/songwriter Weird Al Yankovic performs his hits live. Admission: $49.50. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 North Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com

9/8–11 Cirque Italia
7:30 p.m. (Thursday); 5:30/8:30 p.m. (Friday); 2:30/5:30/8:30 p.m. (Saturday and Sunday). Come see the first traveling water circus in the U.S. This cirque variety show features a 35,000 gallon water tank stage with performers from around the world and is completely animal-free. Admission: $10–50. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Blvd., Wilmington. Info: (941) 704-8572 or www.cirqueitalia.com.

9/9 & 10 Fall Plant Sale
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. The Hobby Greenhouse Club's Fall Plant Sale offers various plants for sale, grown by members, and benefits local horticulture students. Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Ave., Wilmington. Info: (910) 319-7588 or www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

9/9–11 Inshore Challenge
3–8 p.m. (Friday); 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday and Sunday). Premiere inshore tournament located in the heart of North Carolina flounder and red drum territory. Awards ceremony and after-party to follow. Admission: $175–200 to register. Inlet Watch Marina, 801 Paoli Court, Wilmington. Info: (910) 409-8379 or fishermanspost.com/tournaments/cbic.

9/10 Native Plant Festival
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Celebrate the Cape Fear area's native plants and learn how to incorporate them into your garden. Activities for adults and children including native plant vendors, seed swap, displays and presentations by local experts, music and food trucks. Admission: Free. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 547-4390 or arboretum.nhcgov.com.

9/10 Discover the Wonder of Birds
9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Interactive learning stations on several bird topics including feathers, migration, feeding habits and climate change. Held in conjunction with the Native Plant Festival at the NHC Arboretum. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 796-1430 or www.capefearaudubon.org.

9/10 Pier-2-Pier Swim
9 a.m. Two-mile swim competition between Johnnie Mercer's Pier and the Crystal Pier. Admission: $40–60. Johnnie Mercer's Pier, 23 E. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.pier-2-pier.com.

9/10 Fall Migration Program
9:15–10:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden for a free program on fall migration and learn how birds travel and move to secure wintering grounds and feeding sites. Pick up tips on the types of birds expected to move through our region, and the best areas to see them. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/10 Family Science Saturday
10 a.m. (Pre-K); 11 a.m. & 12 p.m. (ages 5–14). Discover the incredible world of insects and investigate how they communicate and what they build. Learn about the life cycle of a butterfly and create fascinating firefly models to take home. Adult participation required. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

9/10 Native Plant Sale
1–4 p.m. Local growers will be out on the sidewalk with a variety of native plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/10 Kreashenz Krush
1–6 p.m. Fundraiser featuring cornhole competitions and obstacle race with grape stomping. Includes two live bands, local vendors, kids, corner with bounce house, food, drinks, silent auction and raffle. Admission: $10–40. Proceeds benefit the Jedrey Family Foundation. Kreashenz Salon and Spa, 3145 Wrightsville Ave., Wilmington. Info: www.kreashenzsalonandspa.com.

9/10 Casino For A Cause
7–11 p.m. Fundraiser featuring live music, a silent auction, raffle, hors d'oeuvres and professional gaming tables. Proceeds benefit Alzheimer's North Carolina. Admission: $75. Porters Neck Country Club, 8403 Vintage Club Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-1944 or www.alznc.org.

9/13 Over 50s Dance
7:30–10 p.m. Over 50s dance including social, line dancing and music provided by Lenny Frank. Couples and singles welcome. Admission: $8. NHC Senior Resource Center, 2222 S. College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 620-8427 or www.overfiftiesdanceclub.org.

9/14 Airlie Gardens Bird Walk
8–9:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden staff and Airlie environmental educators for a relaxed bird walk around Airlie Gardens. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/16–18 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with upcycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy. 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

9/16 Airlie Concert
6–8 p.m. Jim Quick and The Coastline join the Airlie Gardens summer concert series performing beach music. Food and wine available for purchase. Admission: $2–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.airliegardens.org.

9/16 A Capitol Idea
7 p.m. Oysters and The Embers . . . who could ask for a better time? Head up the road to Raleigh for "Shuckin' and Shaggin'," an oyster roast and fundraiser for the North Carolina State Capitol Foundation, which helps preserve our state capitol. 1 East Edenton St., Raleigh. Tickets: ncstatecapitol.org.

9/16 & 17 Dragon Boat Regatta and Festival
6 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. (Saturday). Dragon boat race and festival featuring a kickoff party, parade, live music, vendors, award ceremony and closing celebration. Admission: Free.

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Proceeds benefit Carolina Beach Yacht Basin and Marina, 216 Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 599-2879 or www.carolinabeachdragonboat.com.

9/17 Native Plant Sale

2–4 p.m. Local grower Duane Truscott of My Garden Plants Company will be out on the porch with a variety of native plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 E.Brown St., Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/16 & 17 Arts in Motion

7:30 p.m. Forward Motion Dance Company presents Duets, Pirouettes, and Vignettes, an annual collaborative arts event showcasing the talents of choreographer Tracey Varga. Admission: $17.50–20. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/17 YMCA Triathlon

7 a.m. Triathlon featuring a 1,500-meter swim, 12-mile bike ride and 5k run. Participants must race in under 2 hours and 30 minutes. Admission: $55–135. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington YMCA. 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 251-9622 or www.setupevents.com.

9/17 Oakdale Walking Tour

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Historical walking tour of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery given by local historian Michael Whaley. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 N. 15th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

9/17 Native Plant Sale

10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Local growers from Slatestone Gardens will be out on the sidewalk with a variety of na-

Legends & Main Attractions Series
A Taste of the Town
TAPESTRY
Tribute to Carole King
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7:30 PM
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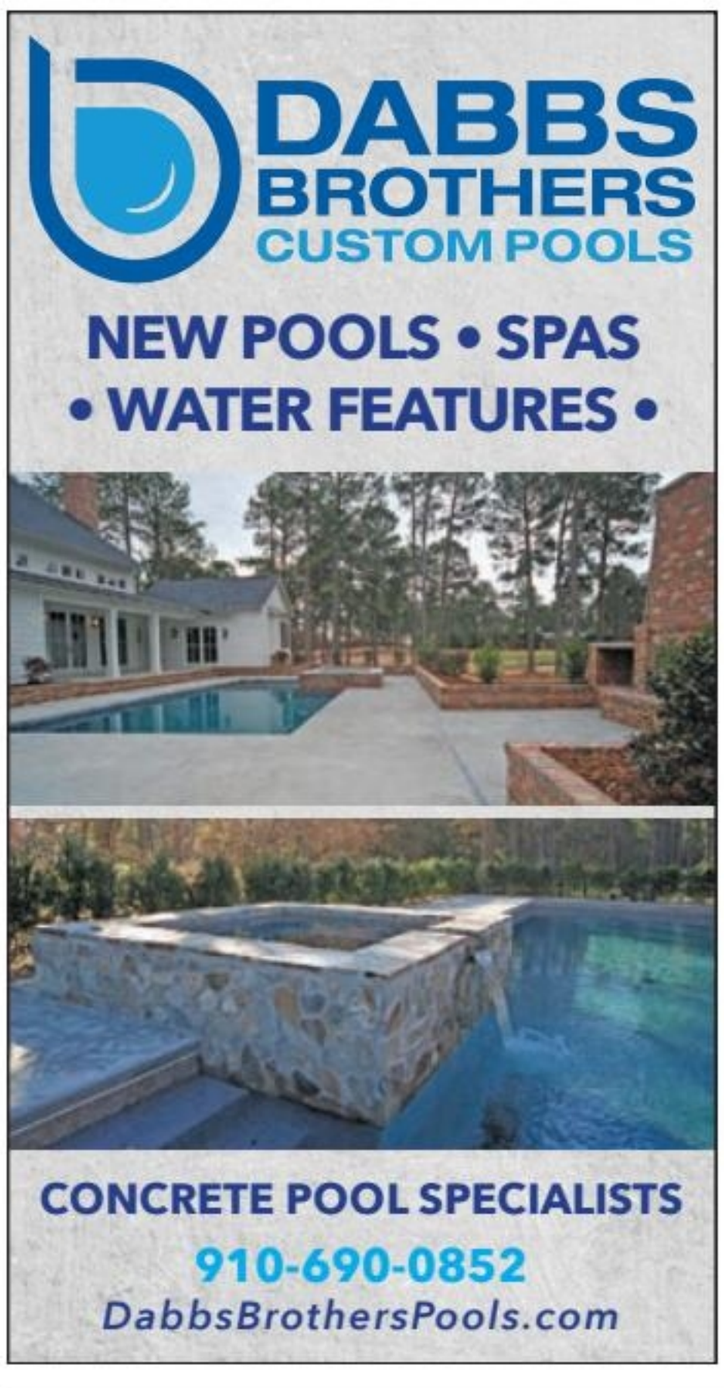

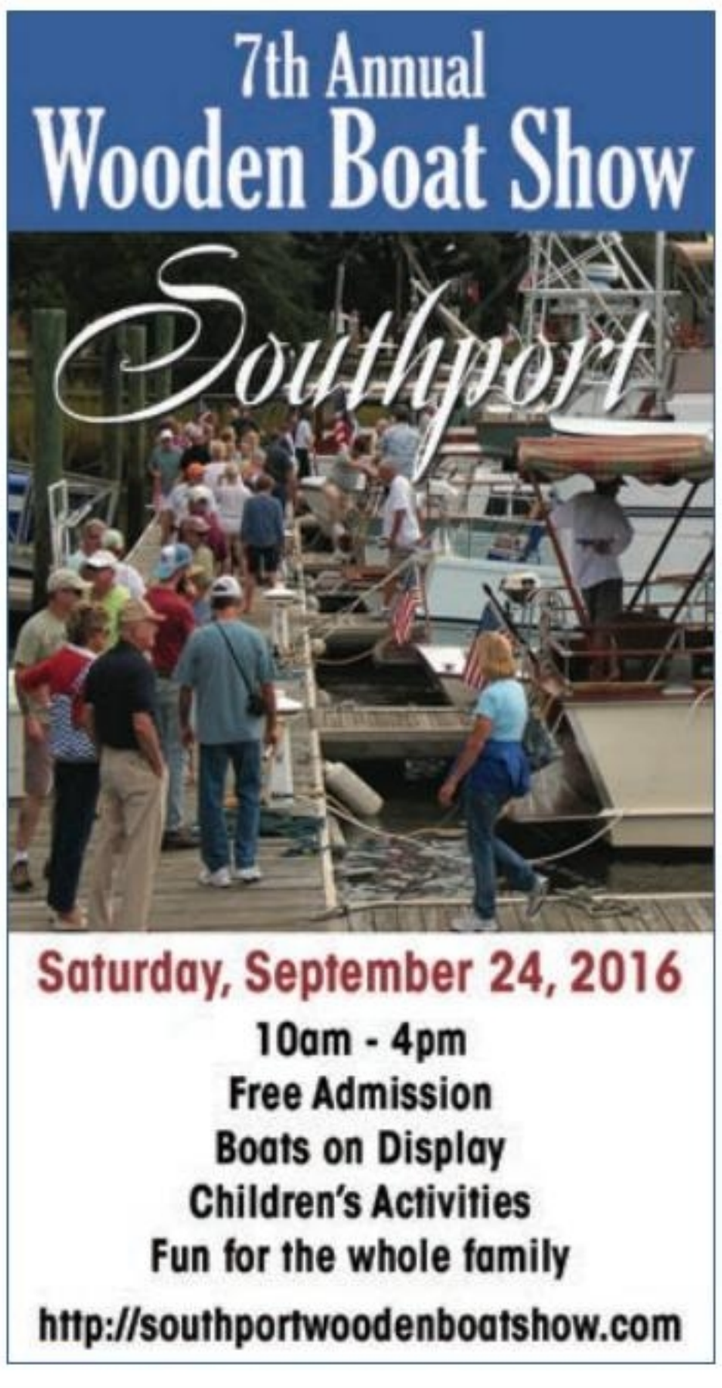

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tive plants for sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/17 — Intercultural Festival
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Intercultural festival featuring music, dance, food, arts and crafts, costumes, literature and more. Odell Williamson Auditorium, BCC, 50 College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 842-6566 or www.bcifestival.org.

9/17 — Symphony Orchestra Concert
7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony's first Masterworks concert showcasing the orchestra with sounds ranging from the antiphonal brass choirs of the 17th century Venetian composer Giovanni Gabrieli to the full symphony in Benjamin Britten's Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Henry Purcell. CFCC Wilson Center, 411 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

9/17 & 18 — NC Rice Festival
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Rice festival held by the North Brunswick Chamber of Commerce featuring arts and crafts vendors, food vendors, a beer garden, kids' play area, youth art show, live music, rice cooking contest and more. Brunswick River Walk, 580 River Road, Belville. Info: (910) 795-0292 or ncricefestival.com.

9/17 & 18 — N.C. Shell Show
9 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 1–10 p.m. (Sunday). Cape Fear Museum showcases hundreds of seashells collected by N.C. Shell Club members, plus arts and crafts exhibitors and vendors in more than 20 categories. Admission: $38/banquet dinner. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-4350 or www.ncshellclub.com.

9/18 — Boogie in the Park
5–7 p.m. The Mark Roberts band joins the "Boogie in the Park" summer concert series performing beach and variety. Bring blankets and snacks. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Ave., Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

9/19–22 — Fire on the Dock
Wilmington chefs battle for your vote at Bluewater Waterfront Grill as part of the NC Competition Dining Series, a single-elimination tournament highlighting the best of the state's food, agriculture and culinary talent. Admission: $59–69. Bluewater Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (828) 265-9075 or www.competitiondining.com.

9/20 — A Taste of the Town
6 p.m. Culinary tasting tour of downtown's best restaurants. Awards for best appetizer, best entrée and best overall. Tour starts at Thalian Hall; complimentary trolley rides available. Admission: $50. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/21 — Southport Bird Walk
8:30–9:30a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden staff for a free bird walk around Southport's historic district and waterfront. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeinc.com.

9/22 — Hunting Beach Birding Trip
Join Wild Bird & Garden for a special birding day trip to Huntington Beach State Park, considered to be among the best birding spots in South Carolina. Pre-registration is required. Admission: $45. Huntington Beach State Park, 16148 Ocean Highway, Murrells Inlet. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardenin.com.

9/22 — Film Screening
7 p.m. Revisit the Wilmington-filmed thriller "Blue Velvet" and the iconic severed ear in the museum's film exhibit. Introduction from "Cucalorus" director Dan Brawley. Admission: $4–8. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

9/23 — Fourth Friday
6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

9/23 — Autism Speaks Gala
7–11 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring hors d'oeuvres, a raffle, cornhole, prizes, DJ, silent auction, photobooth and cash bar. Admission: $30–50. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 N. 4th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

9/23 — Carole King Tribute
7:30 p.m. "Tapestry: Tribute to Carole King" recreates the glorious sound of a Carole King concert, leaving audiences with memories of the great music she wrote and recorded. Admission: $22–40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/23 — Opera and Broadway Music
7:30 p.m. Acclaimed New York soprano Nikoleta Rallis returns home to present a unique gala concert with international piano virtuoso Aza Sydykov. Admission: $25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

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9/23–25 Fall Home Show
11 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Fall home show presented by American Consumer Shows featuring hundreds of exhibitors designed for homeowners in all stages of remodeling, landscaping and redecorating. Admission: Free. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 210-6138 or www.wilmingtonhomeshow.com.

9/24 Battleship Alive
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. The Living History Crew provides insight into the daily life and routine of the crew aboard the USS North Carolina by explaining the duties specific to each sailor's ratings and demonstrating activities that occurred aboard the ship. Admission: $6–14. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

9/24 Bee City Program and Native Plant Sale
9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and representatives from Bee City USA for a free program on the role pollinators play in sustaining the world's plant species, and what we can do to provide them with a healthy habitat. After the program, pick up some locally grown native plants at the sale. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

9/24 Recovery Rockfest
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Free annual substance-free concert event featuring live music, face painting, kid zone, games, vendors, food, live recovery countdown and more. Admission: Free. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (941) 323-2030 or www.recoveryrockfest.com.

9/24 Fall Wine and Beer Walk
1–6 p.m. Self-guided tour of downtown Wilmington's bars, nightclubs and eateries, featuring two samples of wine and beer at participating locations. Admission: $16. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market St., Wilmington. Info: www.wineandbeerwalk.com.

9/24 Aaron Neville Live
8 p.m. One of the world's foremost R&B singers, Aaron Neville performs an intimate duo performance showcasing his remarkable voice accompanied by piano. Admission: $35–75. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com

9/24 Honoring the Legacies of Visionary Leaders — Black Tie Gala
6:30 p..m Countywide CDC invites you to attend the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Legacy Awards Dinner Gala honoring leaders from Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover and Pender Counties. Featuring the North Carolina Central University Jazz Big Band. Tickets: $75. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St. Info: (910) 619-6205 or www.celebratingthedream.org

9/24 & 25 N.C. Spot Festival
7–10 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 10:30 p.m. (Saturday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual festival featuring food, arts and crafts vendors, music, fireworks, gem mining, pony and camel rides, inflatables, a pageant, 5K and more. Admission: $3/admission; $8/dinner. 1422 U.S. Highway 17, Hamstead. Info: www.ncspotfestival.com.

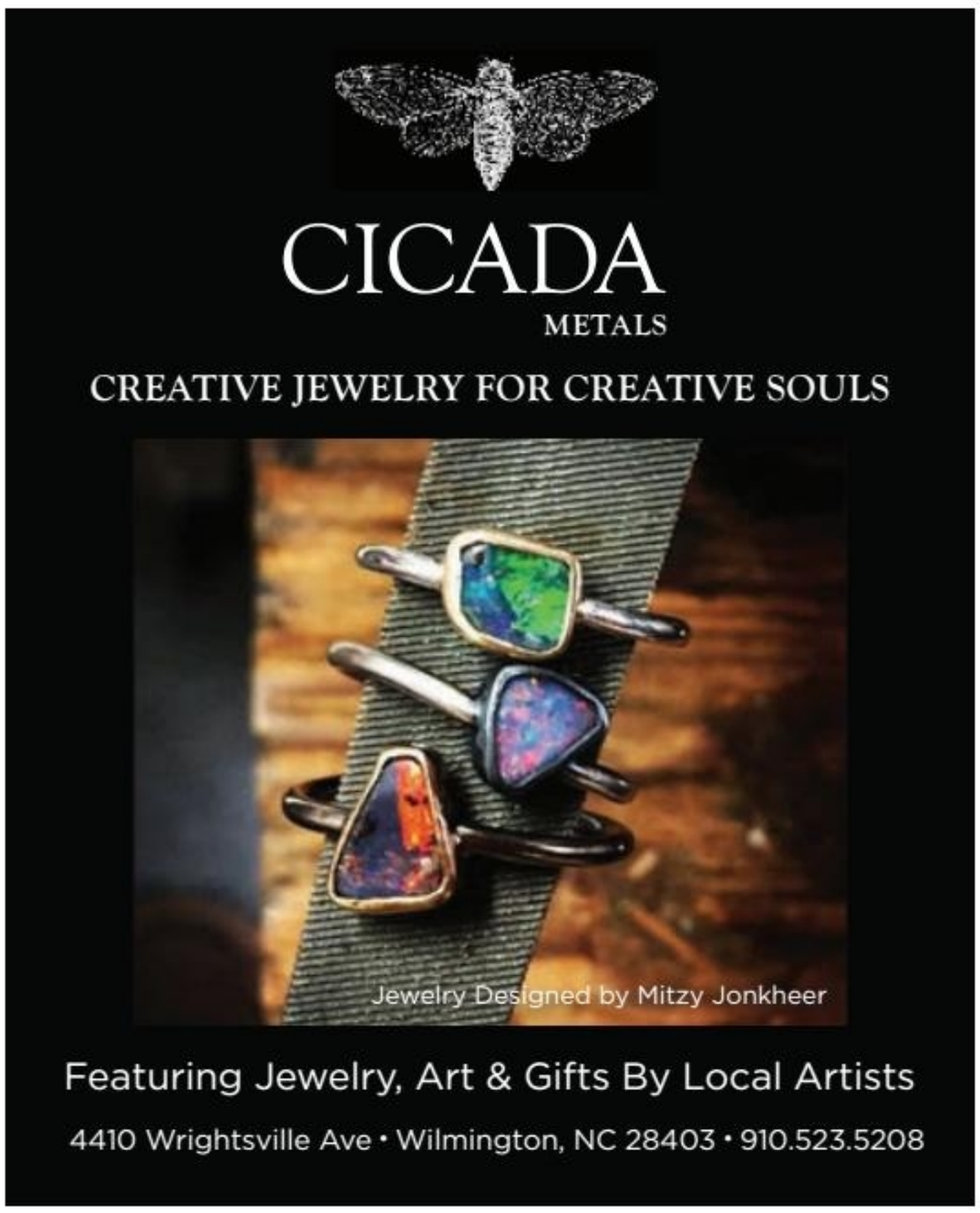
9/25 Chamber Music Concert
3 p.m. In residence at the Jacob's School of Music, Indiana University, the Zora Quartet opens the season with Mozart's "Quartet in D minor K. 421," Turina's "La Oracion del Torero" and Debussy's "Quartet in F minor." UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 5270 Randall Hall, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1079 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

9/25 NC Symphony Concert
7:30 p.m. The NC Symphony presents a program highlighted by Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1" with pianist George Li. Conducted by Grant Llewellyn. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

9/28 Page to Stage
6:30 p.m. Writers, actors and producers share original works of comedy and drama with the community and encourage feedback every fourth Wednesday. Admission: Free, donations appreciated. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 S. 17 St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

9/29 – 10/2 Live Musical
7:30 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents the Tony-nominated musical "Rock of Ages," a throwback to big rock bands. The show features songs by REO Speedwagon, Twisted Sister, Pat Benatar and more. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/30 Sounds of the '70s
8 p.m. Travel back to the 1970s with performances by Ambrosia, Firefall, Player and Stephen Bishop. Admission: $34.50–59.50. CFCC Wilson Center, 701 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com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WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday — **Wrightsville Farmers Market**
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Closes 9/26. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsville-beach.com.

Monday – Wednesday — **Cinematique Films**
7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday — **Wine Tasting**
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday — **Cape Fear Blues Jam**
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. 5th Ave. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday — **T'ai Chi at CAM**
12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (practicing the breath of life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameron-artmuseum.org.

Wednesday — **Wednesday Echo**
7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 E. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Wednesday & Thursday — **Farmers Market**
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Wednesday); 3–7 p.m. (Thursday). Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Closes Sept. 29. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 N., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday — **Yoga at the CAM**
12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameron-artmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday — **Dinner Theatre**
7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents "Greater Tuna," the hilarious send-up of small town morals and mores. Two actors play all twenty of the hilarious citizens of Tuna, Texas' third smallest town. Starts Sept. 9. Admission: $17–37. TheatreNOW, 19 S. 10th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3NOW or theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday — **Carolina Beach Farmers Market**
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, meats, wines, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 431-8122 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday — **Riverfront Farmers Market**
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmington-downtown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday — **Bluewater Waterfront Music**
4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Sept. 4: Key Lime Pie; Sept. 11: Mark Roberts; Sept. 18: L Shaped Lot; Sept. 25: Back of the Boat. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

Sunday — **Grooves in the Grove**
5–7 p.m. Fall concert series held on the lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation. Sept 4: Mojo Collins & Band; Sept. 11: Folkstone String Band; Sept. 18: Massive Grass; Sept. 25: TBD. Admission: $5. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

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Haydn | *Symphony No. 96*
Gabrieli | *Canzon Noni Toni a Duodecim Vocum*
Wagner | *Siegfried's Rhine Journey*

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Piazzolla | *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*
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Port City People

Jazz at the Mansion

The Bellamy Mansion

Thursday, July 14, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Peter Zukoski, Connie Mathis

Prymus Robinson, Daphne Holmes

Chelsea Bird, Brooks Surgan

Michelle Sepulveda, Ken Merritt

Curt Altarac, Ada Ahn, Kristie Hotchkiss, Michael Cerza

Dawn & Ernie Olds

James Simmons, Paula Haller

Deana Bertino, Jim Dupree, Christina Gerfelder

Bill & Ameile Ferimer

Leslie Watson, Angelo Galeotti, Barbara R. Walker

Ron & Linda Morgan

Dr. Don Di Giulian

Port City People

Fourth Friday Gallery Night

Bellamy Mansion, Acme Art Studios, The MC Enry Gallery

Friday, July 24, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Les Conner

Anita Thomas, Kathy Vezzetti

Sue Stubblefield, Gail Hocking, Jeannette & Richard Haas

Chris Lassiter, Becca Semon, Yuli Cordara

Rodney & Constance Fleming

Sabrina Baxter

Heather, Johnnie & Linda Evans

Steve Cox, Claire Mains

Allan & Yvonne Nance

Ann Van Blarcom Korowski, Chris Farley, MJ Cunningham

Paul Schreiber

Leah Schenk, Lane & Wendell Patterson

Port City People

10th Annual Pipeline to a Cure Gala

Wilmington Convention Center

Saturday, August 6, 2016

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

David & Marisa Rizzo

Robert Ryer, Josh & Jen London, Amber Fischer

Kayla Clodfelter, Paige Quispe

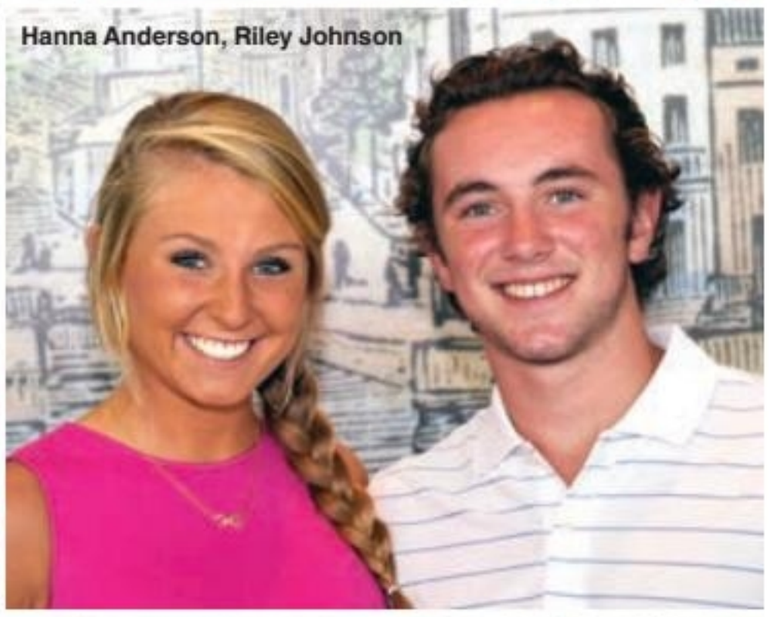
Mike Baker, Ashton Overholt

Sean McGovern, Janine & Kirk Pugh, Tyson Emery

Jake Reiser, Hailee Meeker

Tatham & Lyle Stevens

Jeanne & Elliot Gillies


Hanna Anderson, Riley Johnson

Holly Shaw, Amy & Zach McHugh

Megan Beall, Eric Sabourin

Heather & Jacob Goodman

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Take a Chill Pill

In September, nothing succeeds like . . . moderation

By Astrid Stellanova

Summer's end is here, Star Children. Mercy be, Astrid is relieved, as so many star charts are running hot and boiling over, like my Cadillac's overheated radiator. Cool off, cool down, top off your tank with some nice cool water, and find whatever tickles your pickle. — Ad Astra, Astrid

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
When you celebrate the date of your birth, you don't have to bake your own cake. You don't have to apologize for wanting a party. You don't even have to second-guess what is everybody else's favorite cake. Sometimes you know what you want, but you find yourself worrying about what others want. Take yourself on a different kind of birthday trip this year, and I don't mean you have to actually put on your shoes and go anywhere — just get outside of your comfort zone.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Excess is not your friend this month. The definition of forklift isn't about putting more on your fork than you can lift. Temperance and a little patience will help you overcome some of the challenges in your personal life and also make you find other outlets for all those frustrations taking residence in your psyche.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Your silence is often mistaken for your possessing great depths. Dare I just flat-out say it, Sugar? It's often you trying to be mysterious but even more, it is you refusing to commit what you truly think. There's nothing much wrong in your life right now that a good flat-iron and a cocktail couldn't fix right up.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Imagine you are Lank Lloyd Wright, younger brother of Frank. Or Willy the Kid, the distant cousin of Billy. You feel like you have grown up in the shade. Born into the unfortunate ranks of shadow siblings, not has-beens but never-weres, you don't like that you never have gotten your due. Honey, all of those feelings are going to dissipate this very summer when fame comes knocking.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You and a certain troubled someone go together like drunk and disorderly. They are the flip to your flop. They are also reliably a lot of fun *and* a lot of trouble. Their draw has been irresistible for so long you cannot imagine a month without their talking you into something you would never do without their goading. This would be a good month to try.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Say what, Honey? Your belt won't buckle but your knees do? This is a good time to hit the gym, hit the road, hit a ball . . . just don't hit the pantry. You love to entertain and you know how to set up a moveable feast. But it is exactly the right time to hit the salad bar and the garden patch and say "no" to anything that doesn't look like cream, butter or a heaping spoon of sugar, Sugar.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Summer started off with you acting like some kind of genuine crazy person. Thelma and pleaaaaaaaaaaase! Now that you've been there and done that, come on back to reality, Child. Take charge of your inner GPS and find a detour around Crazy Town, USA.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
It has been a redneck picnic this summer for you, and you enjoyed every last bite. Now on to your next phase. You are known for episodes of sanity, and one is coming up. Grown-up time for you, Sugar Pie. It may read as mind-numbing and boring to you, but just give it a test drive.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You have a will, and that will has been more or less focused upon figuring out how to get your way. Always. Hmmm, hit a roadblock recently, didn't you? Now you have some explaining to do if you want your beloved to forgive and forget. That's all I'm saying.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Contrary to what you believe, you have a tendency to show your emotions all over your face. And what you have been showing lately is the meanest-looking doll face since Chuckie's. Tempers have been flaring, you got into the middle of a ruckus, but you can do better.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
This month is going to be a breeze compared to the hot mess you endured last month. There is every indication you can borrow anything — a cuppa flour, a little time — but don't borrow any more trouble. There are more important things to attend to right now.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Go ahead, Leo, roar. You've got a splinter in your paw and it hurts like the dickens. Actually, it's more like you have a splinter wedged in your heart. The wedgie from Hell. It is going to require some time to find the relief you are seeking. Meantime, do what you can to find an outlet — and I don't mean Tanger's.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

How to Clean a Rug

(And go slightly mad)

By Clyde Edgerton

While I was visiting

Hillsborough a while back, my wife, Kristina, called me from our home in Wilmington and asked me to stop by her sister's house in Pittsboro and pick up a rug cleaning machine. Kristina had moved our couch and rolled up our big rug that needed cleaning.

I'd never seen a rug cleaning machine that I knew of.

I thought things through for about a second and asked, "How much does it cost to just get a rug cleaned?"

I was thinking to myself: I'll have to drive to get the cleaning machine, take it home, figure out how to use it, maybe get one of the kids to help me, take that big rug out on the back deck, clean it, let it dry, put it back, take the cleaner back to Pittsboro.

Kristina answered my question — told me how much it costs to get a rug cleaned.

Holy Moley. I picked up the cleaning machine — it looks like a very large vacuum cleaner — and brought it home. A YouTube video would explain how to operate it.

My job the next day was to write the first draft of a *Salt* magazine essay about the Frontier Cultures Museum in Staunton, Virginia. I was hoping to have a first draft done by noon but my new job — before starting the essay — was to clean two rugs (was one, now two) with the help of my 9-year-old daughter, Truma. Rug No. 1 — very large, maybe 8-by-12 — had been peed on several times by dog No. 1. Rug No. 2 — about 4-by-8 — had been thrown up on at least several times by dog No. 2. I picture this conversation happening very early on several mornings within the last month:

Dog No. 1 says: "Are they up yet?"

Dog No. 2 says: "Nope."

No. 1: "I have to pee."

No. 2: "Pee in the corner of the living room. In the corner by the table. It'll be days before they figure it out."

No. 1: "OK. Would you throw up on that other rug in the play room — kind of keep them distracted?"

No. 2: "Sure."

Truma and I find the YouTube video telling us how to use the machine. The video is 15 minutes long. The person giving instructions seems to be used to talking in a foreign language and I have problems understanding him, but we finally get through the explanation, including how to clean the machine after cleaning the rug. Some assembly and disassembly are involved. Truma takes notes.

Our first task is to go buy some liquid cleaner. About 6 ounces is to be combined with 2 gallons of warm water in a soft plastic container inside a hard plastic container that will keep dirty water separate from the cleaning solution.

We go to Lowe's and they don't have our brand — I'd yet to learn that most any concentrated rug cleaner would work. Duh.

Sitting in the parking lot, I call Home Depot. They don't have our brand, either. I call a rug cleaning service. They are rude. I call another rug cleaning service, explain that I'm sitting in a hot parking lot in a bit of a jam and this person patiently tells me to go to Food Lion.

At Food Lion, the manager walks with me to the rug cleaning stand and finds a substitute concentrate for me. Truma and I buy it and we start home.

At home, we take the machine apart, load it with warm water and cleaner, then put the machine back together. We spread the smaller of the two rugs on our back deck and Truma starts cleaning. Generally speaking, you go over a portion of the rug while holding a trigger beneath the hand grip. The trigger sprays the rug with cleaning solution and then you go over the same portion of the rug and the machine sucks up dirty liquid.

Truma gets tired. I take over and she goes inside, out of the sun.

I finish the cleaning about time it stops being fun. I hang the rugs over the deck railings, disassemble the machine and, in the driveway beside my automobile, start spraying the plastic parts with water from a hose.

The problem with cleaning the plastic parts is that there is a great amount of dog lint inside one of the see-through plastic parts and — though I don't remember the video telling me to unscrew anything — I notice that if I unscrew four screws, I can pull that section apart. Seeing that lint is like feeling a little popcorn shell-like thing between your teeth when you can't free it.

I unscrew the screws and nothing happens — nothing comes apart. Oh. I see four more screws. I unscrew them and the thing falls apart, but the lint is still not exposed in any way.

The screws are lined up on the hood of our car. I start putting the screws back in. A screw rolls off the hood of the car and I hear it plink dully onto the cement driveway. I look. It's nowhere to be seen. I get down on my hands and knees. One of the dogs comes up and sniffs me. It's dog No. 1. She will go back inside the house and say, "Clyde is out in the driveway. He thinks he's a dog. It won't be long before he's peeing on the rug."

I didn't get started on that essay and I cleaned two more rugs the morning after that.

This could go on a long time.

I now better understand the cost of cleaning a rug.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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BUZZY & ELLEN NORTHEN
Broker/REALTOR

910-520-0990
buzzy@intracoastalrealty.com

804-334-2030
ellen@intracoastalrealty.com

JOE & VANESSA RIEKER
Broker/REALTOR

910-442-9688
jrieker@intracoastalrealty.com

910-795-6193
vrieker@intracoastalrealty.com

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